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I Remember Mama

BY

JOHN VAN DRUTEN

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

Adapted from the book
"MAMA'S BANK ACCOUNT"
By KATHRYN FORBES

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(Adapted from the book, " Mama's Bank Account,"
by Kathryn Forbes.)

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I REMEMBER MAMA

Produced at the Aldwych Theatre, London, 1948, with the following cast of characters :

(*in the order of their appearance.*)

Katrin Hanson	Helen Backlin
Mama	Mady Christians
Papa	Gerard Heinz
Dagmar Hanson	Maureen Davis
Christine Hanson	Henryetta Edwards
Mr. Hyde	Maurice Jones
Nels Hanson	Gunnar Hafsten
Aunt Trina	Adrienne Gessner
Aunt Jenny	Lily Kann
Aunt Sigrid	Amy Frank
Uncle Chris	Frederick Valk
A Woman	Josephine Dent
Dr. Johnson	Daniel King
Mr. Thorkelson	Milo Sperber
A Nurse	Pamela Stocks
A Charwoman	Margaret Evans
A Doctor	Peter Grisewood
An Orderly	Vivian Cornell
Elevator Boy	Fred Marshall
Arne	David Cole
Another Nurse	Ethel Ramsay
Soda Clerk	Peter Bartlett
Madeline	Gillian Raine
Dorothy Schiller	Sylvia Clarke
Florence Dana Moorehead	Josephine Wray
Bell-Boy	Peter Bartlett

The play directed by Mady Christians, based on the New York Production by John van Druten.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES.

The action of the play takes place in and around the Kitchen of a house on Steiner Street, San Francisco, in 1910.

NOTE.—The stage directions in this script are based on the method of presentation used in the production at the Music Box Theatre, New York. It is possible that these could be simplified or altered in the case of other productions if it should be found necessary.

FOREWORD TO ACTING EDITION OF

I REMEMBER MAMA

" I Remember Mama " is not an easy play for amateurs. Its physical production, at any rate if it is intended to try to duplicate the New York method of presentation, demands facilities infrequently met with in amateur theatres. Revolving stages, platforms, backdrops, traveller curtains and the like are things to discourage even the hardiest group if it has no more than what may be called " standard equipment."

Yet, in preparing this edition, it has seemed to me that the play does offer, by very reason of its difficulties, a challenge and an opportunity to those groups who are more interested in creating something new and in overcoming problems than they are in reproducing the simple one- or two-set plays from the meticulous stage directions printed in the average acting editions. A director of imagination and invention may find in " I Remember Mama " a stimulus to his talents by the need to find a way to put this piece upon his stage, if it appeals to him.

There is always more than one way of staging any play. When I wrote " I Remember Mama " I was fortunate enough to be in the service of a generous and enthusiastic management who were prepared to give me almost anything I asked for. The result was a lavish and beautiful physical production. Yet I remember well the day when our first " run through " was given for the benefit of a few friends. It was played without scenery or furniture other than the usual rehearsal chairs and tables, without the platforms and curtains that are so important a part of the stage show, and naturally without lights or blackouts. Yet the small invited audience was as much moved and enthusiastic as later audiences in the theatre have been. I am aware that this is not wholly a trustworthy sign ; our audience that day was composed largely of theatre people whose imaginations were trained to visualize a stage setting from a brief description by the director, and trained, too, to make professional allowances in a way that the average member of a lay audience could not do. But at least that experience does suggest that the text has a quality of appeal that is independent of its method of staging.

Having myself devised the New York production, it is hard for me now to imagine other ways of presenting the play. That is, I think, in any case, the task of each individual director. But there are a few indications that I might helpfully give. The play is devised for alternate scenes—the shorter ones being played down front, and the longer ones on the main stage—rather in the manner of a musical play or of the modern productions of Shakespeare. In New York, the front scenes were played on two small revolving stages or turn-tables, L. and R. These revolves are not essential if some other way can be devised of bringing on and off the actors and the very simple bits of furniture and properties. (The furniture *must* be cleared to give an uninterrupted view of the main stage, unless perhaps the theatre is equipped with an apron stage of considerable width, in which case they might by stylised and permanent.) Possibly this can be done with blackouts for the actors, the furniture being set and changed by the stagehands in view of the audience, as was done by the stage-managers on the occasion of the run-through.

The traveller curtains concealing the main stage seem to me to be essential to enable the changes to be made from kitchen to hospital and back again, and from the kitchen to Uncle Chris' ranch. I do not think that the length of the play (it is very long) will permit these changes, however simplified, to be made in view of the audience ; the front or side scenes must follow instantaneously. But here again an inventive director may be able to devise a way. The steps which raise the main stage are not essential, although the variety of levels obtained from their use adds greatly to the pictorial effect in arrangement of groups. For example, Mama, standing higher than the aunts when she reads Uncle Chris' notebook, is much more effective than she would be, standing on the flat.

The cat will, I think, prove less of a problem than is anticipated. Our own New York Uncle Elizabeth, adopted from a foundling hospital, was made to attend every rehearsal, which it spent in the arms of Dagmar or being led around the stage on a leash, to accustom it to its surroundings ; it was well fed just before each performance, and gave surprisingly little trouble. From the one occasion when it disappeared (before its understudy was engaged) I can vouch for the fact that the resurrection scene loses all point if played with a stuffed cat.

The automobile is a problem because of space and sight-line. Otherwise it can be hauled on and off on a rope pulled by stagehands, with the noises being made by separate machinery in the wings. If stage (or offstage) space is limited, it is possible to dispense with the car altogether and to rely only on the noises. In this case, Jessie must quite obviously be shown to the audience walking up and down (she did so even in New York, for the benefit of those sitting too far

over to be able to see the car), having presumably got out of the car to stretch her legs. She must be visible before the aunts make their entrance, and may well be seen, helping Nels with the box of oranges.

These are a few hints only as to the possible handling of problems. The one thing that cannot be dispensed with is an efficient switchboard. There are over a hundred light cues in the New York production, and these and the blackouts are essential (or so it seems to me) to the effectiveness of the show. As I have said, the play is not an easy one, and should be undertaken only by groups ambitious and interested enough to give time, thought and imagination to the production. But from the reception which it has met with in its long New York run I am encouraged to believe that its appeal is not due to its staging but rather to a basic reality and humanity in Miss Kathryn Forbes' characters whom it was my pleasure and privilege to present on the stage.

JOHN VAN DRUTEN.

The fee for the representation of this play by amateurs is Five Guineas, payable in advance to—

Messrs. Samuel French, Ltd.,
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or their authorized agents, who, upon payment of the fee, will issue a licence for the performance to take place.

No performance may be given unless this licence has been obtained.

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The following particulars are needed for the issue of a licence :

Title of the play or plays.
Name of the town.
Name of the theatre or hall.
Date of the performance or performances.
Name and address of applicant.
Name of the Society.
Amount remitted.

Character costumes and Wigs used in the performance of the play may by obtained from Messrs. CHARLES H. FOX, Ltd., 184 High Holborn, W.C.1.

I REMEMBER MAMA

ACT I

The main scene is the Kitchen of the house on Steiner Street, San Francisco, in 1910.

Down-stage, on either side, there are small turntables on which the shorter front scenes are played against very simplified backgrounds. As each scene finishes the lights dim and the table revolves out, leaving an unobstructed view of the main stage. The main stage is raised by two steps, above which running TABS *open and close. (See the Ground Plan at the end of the play.)*

1. *When the* CURTAIN *rises,* KATRIN, *in a spotlight, is seated at a desk on the* R. *turntable, facing the audience. She is writing and smoking a cigarette.* KATRIN *is somewhere in her early twenties. She should be played by an actress who is small in stature, and capable of looking sufficiently a child not to break the illusion in subsequent scenes. She is a blonde. Her hair, when we see her first, is in a modern "up" style, capable of being easily loosened to fall to shoulder length for the childhood scenes. She wears a very short dress, the skirt of which is concealed for the prologue by the desk behind which she is seated.* KATRIN *writes in silence for a few moments, then puts down her pen, takes up her manuscript, and begins to read aloud what she has written.*

KATRIN (*reading*). "For as long as I could remember, the house on Steiner Street had been home. Papa and Mama had both been born in Norway, but they came to San Francisco because Mama's sisters were here. All of us were born here. Nels, the oldest and the only boy—my sister Christine—and the littlest sister, Dagmar." (*She puts down her manuscript and looks out front.*) It's funny, but when I look back, I always see Nels and Christine and myself looking almost as we do to-day. I guess that's because the people you see all the time stay the same age in your head. Dagmar's different. She was always the baby—so I see her as a baby. Even Mama—it's funny, but I always see Mama as around forty. She couldn't always have been forty. (*She puts out her cigarette, picks up her manuscript and starts to read again.*) "Besides us, there was our boarder, Mr. Hyde. Mr. Hyde was an Englishman who had once been an actor, and Mama was very impressed by his flowery talk and courtly manners. He used to read aloud to us in the evenings. But first and foremost, I remember Mama."

(*The* LIGHT *dims down, leaving* KATRIN *only faintly visible.*

2. LIGHTS *come up on the main stage, revealing the house on Steiner Street—a kitchen room. There is a dresser up* C., *filled with china. On either side of the dresser is a door, the one to the* R. *leads to the pantry, the one to the* L. *to the rest of the house. The* L. *wall is a short one. It is the wall of the house, and contains a door upstage leading into the street, being presumably the back door of the house, but the one most commonly used as the entry-door. Beyond it the street is visible, with a single lamp-post* L., *just outside the house. Behind the room rises the house itself with upper windows lighted, and behind it a painted backdrop of the San Francisco hills, houses and telegraph posts. The furniture of the kitchen is simple. A table* C., *with two chairs above it, armchairs at either end, and a low bench below it. Against the* R. *wall upstage is a large stove, below it another armchair. The window is below the door in the* L. *wall and has a low Norwegian chest under it.*)

" I remember that every Saturday night Mama would sit down by the kitchen table and count out the money Papa had brought home in the little envelope."

(*By now the tableau is revealed in full, and the light on* KATRIN *dwindles further. The picture is as she described.* MAMA—*looking around forty—is in the armchair* R. *of the table, emptying the envelope of its silver dollars and smaller coins.* PAPA—*looking a little older than* MAMA—*stands above her. His English throughout is better than hers, with less accent.*)

MAMA. You call the children, Lars. Is good they should know about money.

(PAPA *goes to door up* L., *and calls.*)

PAPA. Children ! Nels—Christine—Katrin !

CHILDREN'S VOICES (*off ; answering*). Coming, Papa !

MAMA. You call loud for Katrin. She is in her study, maybe.

PAPA. She is where ?

MAMA. Katrin make the old attic under the roof into a study.

PAPA (*amused*). So ? (*Shouting.*) Katrin ! Katrin !

KATRIN (*still at her desk*). Yes, Papa. I heard.

PAPA (*returning to the room*). A study now, huh ? What does Katrin study ?

MAMA. I think Katrin wants to be author.

PAPA (*sitting in the armchair* L. *of the table*). Author ?

MAMA. Stories she will write. For the magazines. And books, too, maybe, one day.

PAPA (*taking out his pipe*). Is good pay to be author ?

MAMA. I don't know. For magazines, I think maybe yes. For books, I think no.

PAPA. Then she become writer for magazines.

MAMA. Maybe. But I like she writes books. Like the ones Mr. Hyde reads us.

(DAGMAR *enters up* R. *She is a plump child of about eight. She carries a cat in her arms.*)

Dagmar, you bring that cat in again ?

DAGMAR. Sure, she's my Elizabeth—my beautiful Elizabeth ! (*She crosses to the chest under the window, and sits, nursing the cat.*)

PAPA. Poor Elizabeth looks as if she had been in fight again.

DAGMAR. Not poor Elizabeth. *Brave* Elizabeth. Elizabeth's a Viking cat. She fights for her honour !

PAPA (*exchanging an amused glance with* MAMA). And just what is a cat's honour, little one ?

DAGMAR. The honour of being the bravest cat in San Francisco.

(CHRISTINE *enters up* L. *She, like* KATRIN, *should be played by a small young actress, but not a child. He hair is to her shoulders—her dress short—her age indeterminate. Actually, she is about thirteen at this time. She is the cool, aloof, matter-of-fact one of the family. She carries a box of crayons, scissors and a picture-book.*)

Aren't you, Elizabeth ?

CHRISTINE (*sitting* L. *above the table and starting to colour the picture-book with the crayons*). That disgusting cat !

DAGMAR. She's not disgusting. She's beautiful. Beautiful as the dawn !

CHRISTINE. And when have *you* ever seen the dawn ?

DAGMAR. I haven't seen it, but Mr. Hyde read to us about it.

(MR. HYDE *enters up* L. *He is a slightly seedy, long-haired man in his fifties. Rather of the old-fashioned English " laddie " actor type. He wears a very shabby long overcoat, with a deplorable fur collar, and carries his hat. His accent is English.*)

Didn't you, Mr. Hyde ? Didn't you read to us about the dawn ?

MR. HYDE (*coming down to* DAGMAR). I did, my child of joy. The dawn, the rosy-finger-tipped Aurora . . .

DAGMAR. When can I get to *see* the dawn, Mama ?

MAMA. Any morning you get up early.

DAGMAR. Is there a dawn every morning ?

MAMA. Sure.

DAGMAR (*incredulous*). It's all that beautiful, and it happens every *morning* ? Why didn't anyone *tell* me ?

MR. HYDE. My child, that is what the poets are for. To tell you of *all* the beautiful things that are happening every day, and that no one sees until they tell them. (*He starts for the door* L.)

MAMA. You go out, Mr. Hyde ?

MR. HYDE. For a few moments only, dear Madam. To buy myself a modicum of that tawny weed, tobacco, that I lust after, as Ben Jonson says. I shall be back in time for our nightly reading.

(*He goes out* L. *and disappears down the street, into the wings, off* L.)

MAMA (*rising and going to the door up* L. *; calling with a good deal of sharpness and firmness*). Nels ! Katrin ! You do not hear Papa call you ?

NELS (*off*). Coming, Mama !

KATRIN (*at her desk*). Yes, Mama. I'm coming.

(*She rises. In her few moments in the dark, she has loosened her hair to her shoulders, and we see that her skirt is short as she walks from her desk, and up the steps into the kitchen. As soon as she has left it, the turntable revolves out. Immediately after her,* NELS *enters up* L. *He is a tall, strapping young fellow—old enough to look eighteen or nineteen, or fifteen or sixteen, according to his dress or demeanour. Now he is about fifteen.*)

(*To* CHRISTINE.) Move over. (*She shares* CHRISTINE'S *chair at the table with her, sitting* R. *of* CHRISTINE.)

PAPA. So now all are here.

MAMA. Come, then.

(NELS *sits* R. *above the table.* DAGMAR *remains crooning to* ELIZABETH, *but rises and stands behind* PAPA.)

(*Sorting coins.*) First, for the landlord.

(*She makes a pile of silver dollars. It gets pushed down the table from one member of the family to the next, each speaking as he passes it.* PAPA *comes last.*)

NELS (*passing it on*). For the landlord.

KATRIN (*doing likewise*). For the landlord.

CHRISTINE (*passing it to* PAPA). The landlord.

PAPA. For the landlord. (*He dumps the pile at his end of the table, writing on a piece of paper, which he wraps around the pile.*)

MAMA (*pushing forward another pile*). For the grocer.

(*The business is repeated. During this repeat,* DAGMAR'S *crooning to the cat becomes audible, contrapuntally to the repetitions of "For the grocer."*)

DAGMAR (*in a crescendo*). In all the United States no cat was as brave as Elizabeth. (*Fortissimo.*) In all the *world* no cat was as brave as Elizabeth !

MAMA (*gently*). Hush, Dagmar. Quietly. You put Elizabeth back into the pantry.

DAGMAR (*in a loud stage whisper, as she crosses to the door up* R.). In Heaven or HELL, no cat was as brave as Elizabeth !

(*She goes out with the cat.*)

MAMA. For Katrin's shoes to be half-soled. (*She passes a half dollar.*)

NELS. Katrin's shoes.

KATRIN (*proudly*). *My* shoes !

CHRISTINE (*contemptuously*). Katrin's old shoes.

PAPA. Katrin's shoes.

CHRISTINE (*rising and coming* R. *of* MAMA). Mama, Teacher says this week I'll need a new notebook.

MAMA. How much it will be ?

CHRISTINE. A dime.

MAMA (*giving her a dime*). For the notebook. You don't lose it.

CHRISTINE. I won't lose it. (*She wraps it in her handkerchief.*)

MAMA. You take care when you blow your nose.

CHRISTINE. I'll take care. (*She returns to her seat.*)

PAPA. Is all, Mama ?

MAMA. Is all for this week. Is good. We do not have to go to the Bank. (*She starts to gather up the few remaining coins.*)

(KATRIN *rises, comes downstage and sits on the steps.*)

NELS (*rising*). Mama . . .

(MAMA *looks up, catching an urgency in* NEL.'S *tone.* PAPA *stops smoking for a moment.*)

Mama, I'll be graduating from grammar school next month. Could I—could I go on to High, do you think ?

MAMA (*pleased*). You want to go to High School ?

NELS. I'd like to—if you think I could.

MAMA. Is good.

(PAPA *nods approvingly.*)

NELS (*awkwardly*). It . . . it'll cost a little money. I've got it all written down. (*He produces a piece of paper from his pocket.*) Car fare, clothes, notebooks, things I'll really need. I figured it out with Cy Nichols. He went to High last year.

(PAPA *rises and moves behind* MAMA *to look at the paper* NELS *puts before them.*)

MAMA. Get the *Little* Bank, Christine.

(CHRISTINE *rises and gets a small box from the dresser. She brings it to* MAMA *and then sits again.* MAMA *counts the contents.*)

KATRIN (*herself again, in the present—looking out front*). The Little Bank ! That was the most important thing in the whole house. It was a box we used to keep for emergencies—like the time when Dagmar had croup and Papa had to go and get medicine to put in the steam kettle. I can *smell* that medicine now ! The things that came out of the Little Bank ! Mama was always going to buy herself a warm coat out of it, when there was enough, only there never was.

NELS (*anxiously*). Is there enough, Mama ?

MAMA (*shaking her head*). Is not much in the Little Bank right

now. We give to the dentist, you remember? And for your roller-skates?

NELS (*his face falling*). I know. And there's your warm coat you've been saving for.

MAMA. The coat I can get another time. But even so . . . (*She shakes her head.*)

CHRISTINE. You mean Nels can't go to High?

MAMA. Is not enough here. We do not want to have to go to the Bank, do we?

NELS. No, Mama, no. I'll work in Dillon's grocery after school.

(MAMA *writes a figure on the paper and starts to count on her fingers.* PAPA *looks over, and does the sum in his head.*)

PAPA. Is not enough.

MAMA (*finishing on her fingers against her collarbone*). No, is not enough.

PAPA (*taking his pipe out of his mouth and looking at it a long time*). I give up tobacco.

(MAMA *looks at him, almost speaks, then just touches his sleeve, writes another figure and starts on her fingers again.*)

CHRISTINE. I'll mind the Maxwell children Friday nights. Katrin can help me.

(MAMA *writes another figure.* PAPA *looks over and calculates again. He nods with satisfaction.*)

MAMA (*triumphantly*). Is good! Is enough!

NELS. Gee! (*He moves beside* PAPA *down* R. *and starts to play with a wire puzzle.*)

MAMA. We do not have to go to the Bank. (*She rises, takes the small box to the dresser, then crosses to the stove.*)

(DAGMAR *enters up* R. *without the cat.*)

DAGMAR (*hearing the last line*). Where is the Bank?

CHRISTINE (*leaving the table, moving down* L., *cutting out the picture which she has coloured*). Downtown.

DAGMAR. What's it look like?

CHRISTINE. Just a building.

DAGMAR (*sitting on the bench, below the table*). Like a prison?

CHRISTINE (*sharply*). No, nothing like a prison.

DAGMAR. Well, then, why does Mama always say "We don't want to go to the Bank"?

CHRISTINE. Because—well, because no one ever wants to go to the Bank.

DAGMAR. Why not?

CHRISTINE. Because if we went to the Bank all the time, there'd be no money left there. And then if we couldn't pay our rent, they'd turn us out like Mrs. Jensen down the street.

DAGMAR. You mean, it's like saving some of your candy for to-morrow ?

MAMA (*busy with coffee and cups at the stove and the dresser*). Yes, my Dagmar. Is exactly like saving your candy.

DAGMAR. But if—if all the other people go to the Bank, then there won't be any money left for us, either.

NELS (*kindly*). It isn't like that, Dagmar. Everyone can only get so much.

DAGMAR. How much ?

NELS. However much you've got there—put away. You see, it's *our* money that we put there, to keep safe.

DAGMAR. When did we put it there ?

NELS. I—I don't know when. A long time back, I guess. Wasn't it, Mama ?

MAMA. Is enough about the Bank.

DAGMAR. How much money have we got in the Bank ?

NELS. I don't know. How much, Mama ?

MAMA. Enough.

(*During the last speeches* AUNT TRINA *appears from the wings down* L. *She is a timid, mouselike little woman of about forty, with some prettiness about her. She wears her hat and coat, and a pathetic feather boa. She comes up the street and knocks on the house door.*)

Was the door ?

CHRISTINE (*moving quickly towards the door up* L.). If it's the aunts, I'm going to my boodwar.

KATRIN (*rising, entering the scene*). And I'm going to my study.

MAMA (*stopping them*). You cannot run away. We must be polite to the aunts. (*She crosses and opens the door* L.) Why, is Trina !

PAPA. Trina, and all by herself !

MAMA. Say good evening to aunt Trina, children.

CHILDREN (*together*). Good evening, Aunt Trina.

TRINA. Good evening, children. How well they all look. (*She comes above the table* L.)

MAMA (*following* TRINA). You have a feather boa. Is new. (*Inspecting it.*) Beautiful.

TRINA (*simpering a little*). It was a present.

MAMA (*smiling*). A present ! Look, Lars. Trina has a present.

PAPA (*moving to* TRINA *and feeling the boa*). Is fine. (*He puts* TRINA'S *hat, coat and boa on the chest under the window.*)

MAMA. Jenny and Sigrid don't come with you, Trina ?

TRINA (*embarrassed*). No, I—I didn't tell them I was coming. I want to talk to you, Marta.

MAMA (*smiling*). So ? Sit then, and we talk. (*She puts her in* PAPA'S *chair,* L. *of the table.*)

(PAPA *crosses above the table.*)

TRINA (*nervously agitated*). Could we talk alone ?

MAMA. Alone ?

TRINA. If you wouldn't mind.

MAMA. Children, you leave us alone a little. I call you. Dagmar, you go with Katrin.

KATRIN (*protesting*). Oh, but, Mama . . .

MAMA (*firmly*). Katrin, you take Dagmar !

KATRIN. Yes, Mama. (*Pushing* DAGMAR, *resentfully.*) Come on.

(KATRIN, DAGMAR, CHRISTINE *and* NELS *go out up* L.)

MAMA. Now—what is it, Trina ?

TRINA (*looking down, embarrassed*). Marta . . .

MAMA (*helpfully*). Yes ?

TRINA. Oh, no, I can't say it.

MAMA (*anxiously*). Trina, what is it ?

TRINA. It's—something very personal.

MAMA. You want Lars should go outside ?

TRINA. Would you mind, Lars ? Just for a minute ?

PAPA (*good-humouredly*). No, I go. I know what women's secrets are. (*Teasing.*) As your uncle Chris say—" Vomen ! Pff ! "

MAMA. You have your pipe, Lars ? Is fine night.

(PAPA *takes out his pipe, then lays it down.*)

What is it ?

PAPA. I forget. I give up tobacco.

MAMA. Is still some tobacco in your pouch ?

(PAPA *nods.*)

Then you do not give up tobacco till you have finish. You give up *more* tobacco—not the tobacco you already have.

PAPA. Is not right, Marta.

(*He pats her, takes his pipe, and goes out* L., *outside the house, under the lamp-post, and stands looking up at the stars, smoking.*)

MAMA (*moving* R. *of the table*). So, Trina. Now. What is it ?

TRINA (L. *of the table*). Marta—I want to get married. (*She rises.*)

MAMA. You mean—you want to get married, or there is someone you want to marry ?

TRINA (*coming below the table*). There's someone I want to marry.

MAMA. Does *he* want to marry *you* ?

TRINA (*sitting on the bench*). He says he does.

MAMA (*delighted ; moving below the table*). Trina ! Is wonderful ! (*She sits beside her.*)

TRINA (*crying a little*). I think it is.

MAMA. Who is ?

TRINA. Mr. Thorkelson.
MAMA. From the Funeral Parlour ?

(TRINA *nods.* MAMA *nods, speculatively, but with less enthusiasm.*)

TRINA. I know he isn't very handsome or—or tall. I know it isn't what most people would think a very nice profession, but . . .
MAMA. You love him, Trina.

(TRINA *nods ecstatically.*)

Then is good. (*She pats* TRINA's *hand.*)
TRINA. Marta, will you—will you help me tell the others ?
MAMA. Oh—Jenny and Sigrid—they do not know ?
TRINA. No. I was afraid they'd laugh at me. But if *you* tell them . . .
MAMA. Jenny will not like you tell me first.
TRINA (*desperately*). I can't help that. You've got to tell them not to laugh at me. If they laugh at me, I'll—I'll kill myself.
MAMA (*with decision*). Jenny and Sigrid will not laugh. I promise you, Trina.
TRINA. Oh, thank you, Marta. And—uncle Chris ?
MAMA (*with some seriousness*). Ah !
TRINA. Will you talk to him ?
MAMA. It is Mr. Thorkelson who must talk to uncle Chris. Always it is the husband who must talk to the head of the family.
TRINA. Yes. I know, but—well, uncle Chris is so very frightening. He's so big and black, and he shouts so. And Mr. Thorkelson is— (*she gestures a very small man*) well, kind of timid, really.
MAMA (*gently*). But Trina, if he is to be your husband, he must learn not to be timid. You do not want husband should be timid. *You* are timid. It not good when *both* are timid. (*Then firmly.*) No ! Jenny and Sigrid I speak to, but Mr. Thorkelson must go to uncle Chris.

(PAPA *enters* L.)

PAPA. Marta, Trina, I do not want to interrupt your talk, but Jenny and Sigrid are coming.
TRINA (*alarmed*). Oh, dear ! (*She rises, quickly.*)
PAPA. I see them get off the cable-car. They come up the hill. (*He crosses above the table.*)

(MAMA *rises. She moves round the* R. *end of the table and above it.*)

TRINA (*in a flurry*). I'd better go to your room for a minute.

(*She starts for the door up* L., *turns back, gets her things from the chest, and runs out, carrying them. Meanwhile,* MAMA *has been whispering the news to* PAPA.)

MAMA. The coffee is ready—I get more cups. (*She moves up to the dresser, collects five cups and brings them down to the table.*)

(*During the above,* AUNTS JENNY *and* SIGRID *have entered from the wings down* L. JENNY *is a domineering woman in her fifties;* SIGRID, *whining and complaining.*)

SIGRID (*in the street*). Wait, Jenny, I must get my breath. This hill kills me every time I climb it.

JENNY. You climbed bigger hills than that in the old country.

SIGRID. I was a *girl* in the old country.

(*They march to the door and knock*—SIGRID *following* JENNY.)

MAMA (*opening the door to them*). Jenny. Sigrid. Is surprise. (*To* SIGRID.) Where's Ole?

SIGRID. Working. He's always working. I never see anything of him at all.

MAMA (*crossing to the stove for the coffee-pot*). Is good to work.

SIGRID. It's good to see your husband once in a while, too. (*She sits above the table* L.)

JENNY (*no nonsense about her*). Has Trina been here? (*She comes* L. *of the table.*)

MAMA (R. *of the table*). Trina?

JENNY. She's gone somewhere. And she doesn't know anyone but *you* . . .

MAMA. That is what *you* think.

JENNY. What do you mean by that?

MAMA. Give Lars your coat. I give you some coffee. Then we talk about Trina.

(PAPA *takes* JENNY'S *and* SIGRID'S *coats and puts them on the chest.*)

SIGRID. She *has* been here?

MAMA (*pouring coffee and passing cups*). Yes, she has been here.

JENNY. What did Trina want?

MAMA. She want to talk to me.

JENNY. What about?

MAMA. Marriage.

SIGRID. What?

MAMA (*pouring calmly*). *Marriage.* (*She passes* SIGRID'S *cup.*) Trina wants to get married.

JENNY (*seated* L. *of the table*). That's no news. Of course she wants to get married. Every old maid wants to get married. (*She rolls up her veil.*)

MAMA. There is someone who wants to marry Trina.

JENNY. Who'd want to marry Trina?

MAMA. Mr. Thorkelson.

SIGRID. Peter Thorkelson? Little Peter? (*She gestures a midget.*)

MAMA. He is not so little.

SIGRID. He's hardly bigger than my Arne—and Arne is not ten yet.

MAMA. So he is hardly bigger than your Arne. Does every husband have to be big man ?

JENNY. Trina's making it up. That happens with old maids when they get to Trina's age.

MAMA (*firmly*). No, Jenny—it is true. Mr. Thorkelson wants to marry Trina.

JENNY (*changing her tactics slightly*). Mr. Thorkelson. She'd be the laughing stock. (*She laughs, rises and moves* L.)

MAMA (*moving to* JENNY). Jenny, Trina is here. She will come in in a minute. This is serious for her. You will not laugh at her.

JENNY. I shall do what I please.

MAMA. No, Jenny, you will not.

JENNY. And why won't I ?

MAMA. Because I will not let you.

JENNY. And how will you stop me ?

MAMA. If you laugh at Trina, I will tell her of the time before your wedding when your husband try to run away.

SIGRID (*rising, intrigued*). What is that ?

JENNY. Who told you that ?

MAMA. I know.

SIGRID (*intrigued ; stealing around and below the table*). Erik—tried to run away ?

JENNY. It's not true.

MAMA. Then you do not mind if I tell Trina.

JENNY. Uncle Chris told you.

SIGRID (*tenaciously*). Tried to run away ?

MAMA. It does not matter, Sigrid. Jenny will not laugh at Trina now. Nor will you ! For if *you* laugh at her, I will tell her of your wedding night with Ole, when you cry all the time, and he send you back to mother.

PAPA (*with sudden enjoyment*). This I do *not* know !

MAMA (*reprovingly*). Is no need you should know. I do not tell these stories for spite—only so they do not laugh at Trina. Call her, Lars. You like more coffee, Jenny ? Sigrid ?

(PAPA *goes to the door up* L.)

PAPA (*calling*). Trina.

(MAMA *pours coffee for* JENNY. MR. HYDE *reappears down* L., *and lets himself into the house. The* AUNTS *are standing in line with* MAMA.)

MR. HYDE (*seeing company*). Oh, I beg your pardon. I was not aware . . .

MAMA. Mr. Hyde, these are my sisters.

MR. HYDE. Enchanted, ladies, Madame, Madame. The Three Graces.

(*He bows.* SIGRID *giggles coyly.* MR. HYDE *goes to the door up* L.)

You will excuse me ?

MAMA. Sure, Mr. Hyde.

MR. HYDE. I shall be in my room.

(*He goes out.*)

JENNY (*moving* L. *of the table*). So *that's* your famous boarder. Has he paid you his rent yet ? Three months he's been here, hasn't he ?

MAMA (R. *of the table*). Is hard to ask. Surely he will pay soon.

JENNY (*with a snort*). Surely he won't ! If I ran my boarding house the way you run this place . . .

PAPA. Maybe your boarders wouldn't always leave you.

JENNY. If Marta thinks she's going to get the warm coat she's always talking about out of *that* one . . .

MAMA. Jenny, Mr. Hyde is a gentleman. He reads to us aloud. Wonderful books—Longfellow, and Charles Dickens, and Fenimore Kipling.

(TRINA *steals in up* L. *She hesitates in the doorway.*)

Come in, Trina. The coffee is getting cold. (*She pours a cup. There is a silence.*) I tell them.

JENNY (*to* TRINA). Why did you come to Marta first ?

(TRINA *comes down to* R. *of* PAPA.)

PAPA. She thought Marta would understand.

JENNY. Aren't Sigrid and I married women, too ?

PAPA. You have been married longer than Marta. She think maybe you forget.

(TRINA *comes down below the table.*)

JENNY. What sort of a living does Mr. Thorkelson make ?

TRINA (*sitting on the bench below the table*). I—I haven't asked.

SIGRID (*sitting* R. *of the table*). Can he keep you ?

TRINA. I don't think he would have asked me to marry him if he couldn't.

JENNY (*sitting* L. *of the table*). Maybe he thinks you are going to keep *him.*

MAMA (*warningly*). Jenny !

SIGRID. Maybe he thinks Trina will have a dowry like the girls at home.

TRINA. Well, why shouldn't I ? You all had dowries . . .

JENNY. We were married in Norway. And our parents were alive. Where would your dowry come from, I'd like to know ?

TRINA. Uncle Chris. He's head of the family.

JENNY. And who will ask him ?

TRINA. He won't need asking. When Mr. Thorkelson goes to see him . . .

JENNY. Uncle Chris will eat him !

SIGRID (*giggling maliciously*). Little Peter and uncle Chris !

MAMA (*with meaning*). Maybe uncle Chris will tell him some family stories. He knows many, does uncle Chris.

(*The* AUNTS *put down their cups discomfited.*)

JENNY (*to change the subject*). Where are the children ? Aren't we going to see them before we go ?

PAPA. Of course. I'll call them. (*He goes to the door and does so, shouting.*) Children ! Your aunts are *leaving* !

CHILDREN'S VOICES (*eagerly shouting back*). Coming, Papa !

JENNY (*rising*). You come with us, Trina ?

(SIGRID *rises.*)

MAMA. I think maybe Trina like to stay here and listen to Mr. Hyde read to us. You like, Trina ?

TRINA (*rising*). Well, if I wouldn't be in the way. I asked Mr. Thorkelson to call for me here. He'll see me home. I'll help you with the coffee things.

(*She takes the tray of coffee cups and goes into the pantry.* KATRIN *enters up* L. *She carries her diary.* DAGMAR *follows her, and behind them,* CHRISTINE.)

KATRIN
DAGMAR } (*together ; curtsying*). Good evening, Aunt Sigrid. Good evening, Aunt Jenny.

(CHRISTINE *sketches a perfunctory curtsy without speaking.*)

JENNY. Where have *you* all been hiding yourselves ?

DAGMAR (*going into the pantry*). We've been in Christine's boodwar.

JENNY. Her *what* ?

MAMA. Christine makes the little closet into a boudoir. I give her those bead portières, Jenny, that you lend us when we come from the old country.

SIGRID. And what does she do there ?

CHRISTINE (*impertinently*). What people usually do in boudoirs.

MAMA. Christine, that is rude. It is her little place to herself.

(NELS *enters up* L.)

NELS. Hello, Aunt Sigrid. Hello, Aunt Jenny. (*He comes down* L.)

SIGRID (*crossing to* NELS, *shaking hands*). Good evening, Nels. My, how tall he is getting !

MAMA (*proudly*). Yes, is almost as tall as his Papa.

(NELS *sits on the chest under the window.*)

SIGRID. He looks to me as if he was outgrowing his strength. Dagmar was looking pale, too.

(DAGMAR *enters up* R. *She is carrying the cat.*)

(*She jumps.*) Goodness, what a horrid-looking cat.

DAGMAR. She's not. She's beautiful.

PAPA. Is her new friend. She goes with Dagmar everywhere.

CHRISTINE (*sitting* L., *above the table*). She does. First thing you know, she'll have the cat sleeping with her.

DAGMAR (*eagerly*). Oh, Mama, can I ? Can I, Mama ? (*She comes to the bench and sits.*)

JENNY. Certainly not. Don't you know a cat draws breath from a sleeping child ? You wouldn't want to wake up some morning *smothered*, would you ?

DAGMAR. I wouldn't care. Elizabeth can have *all* my breath ! (*She blows into the cat's face.*) There !

JENNY (*putting on her gloves*). Elizabeth—what a very silly name for a cat.

NELS (*rising*). It's a very silly name for *that* cat. It's a Tom.

MAMA. Nels, how you know ?

NELS. I looked !

DAGMAR. How can you tell ?

NELS. You can.

DAGMAR. But how ?

MAMA (*quickly warning*). Nels, you do not say how !

NELS (*to* DAGMAR). So you'd better think up another name for him.

DAGMAR. I won't. He's Elizabeth. And he's going to *stay* Elizabeth.

PAPA. We could call him *Uncle* Elizabeth !

DAGMAR (*laughing delightedly*). Uncle Elizabeth ! Do you hear, Elizabeth ? You're called *Uncle* Elizabeth now !

JENNY. Such foolishness ! Well, good-bye, all. Marta. Lars.

(*Good-byes are exchanged all around, the* CHILDREN *curtsy formally.*)

MAMA (*crossing to the door* L.). Good-bye, Jenny. Good-bye, Sigrid. Nels, you go tell Mr. Hyde we are ready for the reading.

(NELS *goes off up* L. *The* AUNTS *go out* L. *and walk down* L. MAMA *stands in the doorway, waving good-bye.*)

SIGRID (*as they go*). Well, I never thought we'd live to see Trina get married.

JENNY. She's not married yet. She's got uncle Chris to deal with first.

(*They disappear into the wings* L. MAMA *returns into the room and crosses to the door up* R.)

MAMA (*calling into the pantry*). Trina, they have gone. Dagmar, you put Elizabeth out for the night now.

DAGMAR (*correcting her*). *Uncle* Elizabeth !

MAMA. *Uncle* Elizabeth.

(DAGMAR *goes out into the pantry with the cat.* TRINA *comes in as* MR. HYDE, *carrying a book, and* NELS *enter up* L.)

Mr. Hyde, this is my sister Trina.

MR. HYDE (*bowing*). Enchanted !

MAMA (*seating himself* R. *of the table*). Mr. Hyde reads to us *The Tales From Two Cities*. Is beautiful story. But sad.

TRINA (*brightly*). I like sad stories. (*She gets out her handkerchief.*)

(*The whole family group themselves around the table,* MAMA R. *in her old chair,* PAPA *fetches the chair from below the stove and sits above her,* TRINA R. *above the table,* NELS L. *above the table.* DAGMAR *enters and seats herself on the floor below* MAMA. MR. HYDE *takes the armchair* L. *of the table.* CHRISTINE *sits on the floor below the table.* KATRIN *is on the steps down* R.)

MR. HYDE. To-night, I would like to finish it.

MAMA. Is good.

MR. HYDE. Are you ready ?

CHILDREN. Yes, please, Mr. Hyde.

MR. HYDE. I will go on from where we left off. (*He starts to read.*) " In the black prison of the Conciergerie, the doomed of the day awaited their fate. They were in number as the weeks of the year. Fifty-two were to roll that afternoon on the life-tide of the City to the boundless, everlasting sea . . . "

(*The* LIGHTS *dim down slowly, leaving spots on* KATRIN *and* MR. HYDE *only.*)

KATRIN. I don't think I shall ever forget that night. It was almost midnight when he came to the end, and none of us had noticed.

MR. HYDE (*reading from the last page*). " It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done ; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known." (*He closes the book.*) " The End."

3. (*The* R. *turntable revolves in again.* KATRIN *rises from the step, and crosses to her desk on the turntable.*)

KATRIN. I wrote in my diary that night before I went to bed. (*She reads aloud from it.*) " To-night Mr. Hyde finished *The Tale of Two Cities*. The closing chapters are indeed superb. How beautiful a thing is self-sacrifice. I wish there were someone I could die for." (*She sits looking out front.*) Mr. Hyde read us all kinds of books. He thrilled us with *Treasure Island*, and terrified us with *The Hound*

of the Baskervilles. I can still remember the horror in his voice as he read . . .

MR. HYDE (*still on the main stage in his spot : reading*). " Dr. Mortimer looked strangely at us for an instant, and his voice sank almost to a whisper as he answered : ' Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic *hound* ! ' " (*He closes the book.*) We will continue to-morrow night. If you are interested.

KATRIN (*looking out in front*). If we were interested ! You couldn't have kept us from it. It meant a lot to mama, too, because Nels stopped going nights to the street corner to hang about with the neighbourhood boys. The night they got into trouble for breaking into Mr. Dillon's store, Nels was home with us. And sometimes Mr. Hyde read us poetry. *The Lady of the Lake* and the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*

MR. HYDE (*reading*) :

" About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night.
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green and blue and white."

(*The* LIGHT *on* MR. HYDE *goes out, and the* TABS *close on the kitchen scene.*)

KATRIN. There were many nights I couldn't sleep for the way he had set my imagination dancing. (*Reading from her diary.*) " What a wonderful thing is literature, transporting us to realms unknown." (*To herself.*) And all the time my school teacher kept telling me that I ought to write about things I knew. I did write a piece for her once about uncle Chris, and she said it wasn't nice to write like that about a member of one's own family. Papa called mama's uncle Chris a black Norwegian, because of his dark hair and fierce mustache, but there were others in the family who claimed that he was black in a different way. The aunts, for example.

4. (*The* LIGHT *comes up on the* L. *turntable, representing* JENNY'S *kitchen.* JENNY *is rolling pastry.* TRINA *is crocheting.*)

JENNY. Black ! I'll say he's black. Black in his heart. Cursing and swearing . . .

TRINA. Marta says that's only because it hurts him to walk.

JENNY. Rubbish. I know all about his limp and the accident back in the old country—but has anyone ever heard him complain ? Marta's always making excuses for him.

TRINA. I know—but he *is* good to the children. All those oranges he's always sending them . . .

JENNY. Oranges ! What good is oranges ? Turn 'em yellow. They're the only things he's ever been known to give away, anyway. He's got other uses for his money.

TRINA. What you mean ?

JENNY. Bottles ! And that woman he lives with !

TRINA. He *says* she's his housekeeper.

JENNY. Well, he couldn't very well come right out and call her what she is, could he ? Though *I* will one of these days. And to his face, too.

(SIGRID *enters* C. *through the* TABS. *She crosses to* JENNY *and* TRINA.)

SIGRID. Jenny. Trina. What do you think ? What do you think uncle Chris has done now ?

TRINA. What ?

JENNY. Tell us.

SIGRID. You know my little Arne's knee—that fall he had two months ago ? The man at the drugstore said it was only a bruise, but to-day it was hurting him again, so I left him home when I went to do the marketing. I asked Mrs. Schultz next door to keep an eye on him, and who should turn up, not ten minutes after I'd gone, but uncle Chris. And what do you think ?

JENNY. Well, tell us, if you're going to. Don't keep *asking* us.

SIGRID. He took one look at Arne's knee, bundled him into that rattletrap old automobile of his, and rushed him straight off to the hospital. I've just come from there. And what do you think ? They've operated ! They've got him in plaster of Paris !

JENNY. Without consulting you ?

SIGRID. It seems the doctor is a friend of his . . . that's why he did it. No, this time he's gone too far. To put a child of Arne's age through all that pain. They wouldn't even let me *see* Arne. I'm going to tell uncle Chris exactly what I think of him . . .

JENNY. That's right.

SIGRID. I'm going to tell him right now. (*Weakening a little.*) Come with me, Jenny.

JENNY. Well, I . . . No, I can't leave my baking.

SIGRID. You must, Jenny. We must stand together. You come, too, Trina, and ask about your dowry. *Make* him give it to you.

TRINA. Oh, but—Marta said Mr. Thorkelson should do that . . .

JENNY. Well, then, go and get Mr. Thorkelson. Go down to the mortuary and get him now. Sigrid is right. We girls have got to stand together !

(BLACKOUT. *The turntable revolves out.*)

KATRIN (*at her desk*). Nobody knew where uncle Chris lived. That was part of the mystery about him. He used to roam up and down the state buying up farms and ranches that had gone to pieces, and bullying them back into prosperity. Then he'd sell at a profit and move on again. Two or three times a year he'd descend on the city in his automobile and come roaring and stamping into our house.

(*The* LIGHT *on* KATRIN *dims.*

5. *The sound of a very old and noisy Ford car changing gears is heard off* L., *grinding and screaming as it comes to a standstill. Then* UNCLE CHRIS' *voice, shouting.*)

UNCLE CHRIS (*off*). Marta ! Lars ! Children—vere are you ?

(*The* TABS *part on the kitchen again. Outside in the street is* UNCLE CHRIS' *car—an antique model. A woman is seated beside the empty driver's seat.* UNCLE CHRIS *is knocking on the house door. He is an elderly, powerful, swarthy man with a limp. In the kitchen,* NELS *and* CHRISTINE *are cowering. A doctor's bag and hat are on the chest below the window.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. Marta ! Lars !

CHRISTINE (*scared*). It's uncle Chris.

NELS (*equally so*). I know.

CHRISTINE. What'll we do ?

UNCLE CHRIS. Is nobody home ? Hey, there—is nobody home? (*Banging on the door.*) Hey—someone—answer the door. (*He tries the door handle, it opens and he strides, limpingly, in. He has a strong accent, and uses the Norwegian pronunciation of the children's names.*) So, vat is—you do not answer the door ? You do not hear me calling ?

(*The* CHILDREN *cower silently.*)

I say, you do not hear me calling ? I do not call loud enough ?

CHRISTINE. Y-yes, uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. Which yes ? Yes, you do not hear me—or yes I do not call loud enough ?

NELS. We heard you, uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. Then why you do not come ?

NELS. We—we were just going to.

(KATRIN *has left her desk and come up the steps.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. Let me look at you. You too, Katrinë, do not stand there—come and let me look at you. (*They line up down* C. *as though for inspection. He thumps* NELS *between the shoulder-blades.*) Stand tall ! (*They all straighten up.*) Um-hum. By the dresser, where the marks are.

(NELS *goes to the wall by the dresser up* R. UNCLE CHRIS *compares his mark with the previous one—and makes a new one on the wall, writing by it.*)

Two inches. Two inches in—— (*examining the date*) six months. Is good.

(NELS *comes down* R. CHRISTINE *takes his place.*)

Christinë. Show me your teeth.

(CHRISTINE *opens her mouth.*)

You brush them goot ?

(CHRISTINE *nods.*)

Nils, there is a box of oranges in the automobile. You fetch them in.

(NELS *crosses and goes out* L.)

(*He measures* CHRISTINE.) Where is the little von ? Dagmar ?

KATRIN. She's sick, uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS (*arrested*). Sick ? What is the matter with her ?

KATRIN. It's her ear. She's had an earache for two days. Bad earache. Mama sent for the doctor.

UNCLE CHRIS. Goot doctor ? What he say ?

KATRIN. He's in there now. (*She points off, up* L.)

(CHRISTINE *is standing by the wall, afraid to move.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. I go in. (*He starts towards the door up* L.)

(MAMA *and* DR. JOHNSON *enter up* L. CHRISTINE *and* KATRIN *move down* R. NELS *has gone to the car, and with nervous smiles at the woman seated by the driver's seat, has heaved out a huge box of oranges. He returns with the oranges during the ensuing scene.*)

MAMA (*to* UNCLE CHRIS). Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. How is with Dagmar ?

MAMA. Is bad. Doctor, this is my uncle, Mr. Halvorsen.

DOCTOR. How do you do, sir ? (*He goes to the chest below the window for his hat and bag.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. What is with the child ?

DOCTOR. We must get her to a hospital. At once. We'll have to operate.

MAMA. Operate ?

DOCTOR. I'm afraid so.

MAMA. Can wait ? Until my husband comes home from work ?

DOCTOR. I'm afraid not. Her best chance is for us to operate immediately.

MAMA (*after a second*). We go. (*She goes to the dresser for the Little Bank.*)

UNCLE CHRIS (*who has watched her decision with approval, turns to the* DOCTOR, *moving to him down* L.). What is with the child ?

DOCTOR. I'm afraid it's a mastoid.

UNCLE CHRIS. Ah—then you operate immediately.

(MAMA *comes down to the table and empties the contents of the Little Bank on to it.*)

DOCTOR (*resenting this*). That's what I said.

UNCLE CHRIS. Immediately !

MAMA. Doctor—is enough ?

DOCTOR (*moving in to* L. *of the table*). I was thinking of the County Hospital.

MAMA. No. No. We pay. Is enough ?

KATRIN. If there isn't, we can go to the Bank.

CHRISTINE. We've got a bank account.

MAMA. Is enough without we go to the Bank, Doctor? My husband is carpenter. Make good money.

UNCLE CHRIS. If there is need of money, *I* pay.

DOCTOR (*mainly in dislike of* UNCLE CHRIS). It'll be all right. We'll take her to the Clinic. You pay what you can afford.

UNCLE CHRIS. Goot. Goot. I have a patient there already. My nephew, Arne. They operate this morning on his knee.

DOCTOR. Are you a physician, sir?

(NELS *enters* L. *with the box of oranges.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. I am better physician than most doctors. Nils, there, my other nephew, he become doctor when he grow up.

(NELS *looks up, surprised. He puts the oranges on the table.*)

DOCTOR (*chilly*). Oh, indeed—very interesting. Well, now, if you will have the child at the Clinic in—shall we say an hour's time?

UNCLE CHRIS (*striding across below the table*). The child will be at the Clinic in *ten* minutes' time. I haf my automobile.

DOCTOR. I can hardly make arrangements in ten minutes.

UNCLE CHRIS (R. *of the table*). *I* make arrangements. I know doctors.

MAMA. Uncle Chris. Dr. Johnson arrange. He is good doctor.

DOCTOR (*ironically*). Thank you, madam.

MAMA. You go, Doctor. We come.

DOCTOR. Very well, in an hour, then. And Dagmar will be well taken care of, I promise you. I will do the operation myself.

UNCLE CHRIS. I watch.

DOCTOR. You will do no such thing, sir.

UNCLE CHRIS. Always I watch operations. I am head of family.

DOCTOR. I allow no one to attend my operations.

UNCLE CHRIS. Are so bad?

DOCTOR (*to* MAMA). Mrs. Hanson, if I am to undertake this operation and the care of your child, it must be on the strict understanding that this gentleman does not come near either me or my patient.

MAMA. Yes, Doctor, I talk to him. You go to hospital now, please.

DOCTOR. Very well. But you understand—nowhere near me, or I withdraw from the case.

(*He goes out* L., *down the street and into the wings.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. I go see Dagmar. (*He crosses above the table towards the door up* L.)

MAMA (*stopping him above the table*). Wait. Uncle Chris, is kind of you, but Dagmar is sick. You frighten her.

UNCLE CHRIS. I frighten her ?

MAMA. Yes, uncle Chris. You frighten everyone . . .

UNCLE CHRIS (*amazed*). I ?

MAMA. Everyone but me. Even the girls—Jenny, Sigrid, Trina—they are frightened of you.

UNCLE CHRIS. The girls ! Vomen ! Pff !

MAMA. And the children, too. So Nels and I get Dagmar. You drive us to hospital in your automobile, but you do not frighten Dagmar. And you leave doctor alone. Dr. Johnson is *fine* doctor. You come with me, Nels. You carry Dagmar.

(NELS *and* MAMA *go out up* L. UNCLE CHRIS *stands in amazement and puzzlement.* KATRIN *and* CHRISTINE *watch him, hardly daring to move.*)

UNCLE CHRIS (*coming down* L. *of the table*). Is true ? I frighten you ? Christinë—Katrinë—you are frightened of me ? Come, I ask you. Tell me the truth. You are frightened of me ?

KATRIN (*tremulously*). A—little, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS (*sitting on the bench*). No ? And you, Christinë ?

CHRISTINE. Y—yes, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. But Nils—Nils is a boy—he is not frightened ?

CHRISTINE. Not—not as much as we are . . .

UNCLE CHRIS. But he is frightened ?

CHRISTINE. Yes, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS (*with a roar*). But why ? What is there to be frightened of ? I am your uncle Chris—why do I frighten you ?

CHRISTINE. I don't know.

UNCLE CHRIS. But that is bad. Very bad. The aunts, yes, I like to frighten them.

(KATRIN *and* CHRISTINE *giggle.*)

That makes you laugh. (*He rises and crosses to them.*) You do not like the aunts ? Come, tell me. You do not like the aunts ? Say !

KATRIN. Not—very much, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. And which do you not like the most ? Jenny—Sigrid—Trina. Tell me—huh ?

KATRIN. I think I like aunt Jenny least. She's so—so bossy.

CHRISTINE. I can't stand aunt Sigrid. Always whining and complaining.

UNCLE CHRIS (*with a great roar of laughter*). Is good. Jenny, bossy. Sigrid, whining. Is true ! But your mama, she is different. And she cook goot. The aunts, they cannot cook at all. Only you do not tell your mama we have talked of them so. It is a secret, for us. Then you cannot be frightened of me any more—when we have secret. I tell you my secret, too. *I* do not like the aunts.

And so that they do not bother me, I frighten them and shout at them. You I do not shout at if you are goot children . . .

(JENNY, SIGRID *and* TRINA *enter down* L. *They are accompanied by* MR. THORKELSON, *a terrified little man. They move up to the street door.*)

And clean your teeth goot, and eat your oranges. (*He takes out a snuff-box and partakes of its contents.*)

SIGRID (*stopping in the street*). Jenny. Do you see what I see? A woman, in his automobile.

JENNY. How shameful!

SIGRID. Ought we to bow?

JENNY. Bow? To a woman like that? We cut her. That's what we do. I'll show you.

(*She smiles at the front door, ignoring the woman in the car, and enters the house.* SIGRID, TRINA *and* MR. THORKELSON *follow.*)

Uncle Chris, Sigrid has something to say to you.

SIGRID (*with false bravery*). Uncle Chris, you took Arne to the hospital . . .

UNCLE CHRIS (R. *of the table*). Yes, I take Arne to the hospital. And now we take Dagmar to the hospital, so you do not clutter up the place.

JENNY (L. *of the table*). What's the matter with Dagmar?

CHRISTINE. It's her ear. Dr. Johnson's going to operate.

SIGRID (*seizing her favourite word*). Operate? This is some more of uncle Chris's doing. Did you hear what he did to Arne?

UNCLE CHRIS (*turning on her*). Sigrid, you are a whining old fool, and you get out of here . . .

SIGRID (*deflating*). We'd better go, Jenny . . .

JENNY (*stoutly*). No—there has been enough of these high-handed goings-on . . .

UNCLE CHRIS. And you, Jenny—you are a bossy old fool, and you get out of here, too, and we take Dagmar to hospital.

(NILS *enters at* L., *carrying* DAGMAR *in his arms, wrapped in a blanket.*)

You got her goot, Nils?

NILS. Sure, uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS (*crossing* L. *to the street door*). We go.

JENNY (*getting between him and the door*). No! You are going to hear me out. (*Weakening.*) That is, you are going to hear *Sigrid* out . . .

UNCLE CHRIS. If you do not get out of the way of the door before I count three, I throw you out. And Sigrid, too, as big as she is. Von . . .

(SIGRID *moves.*)

Two . . .

(JENNY *moves.*)

(*He looks back at the children with a wink and a smile.*) Is goot ! You put her in back of the car, Nils.

(NELS *goes out,* L., *carrying* DAGMAR, *and lifts her into the car.* UNCLE CHRIS *follows. He cranks the car.*)

TRINA (*running to the door after him, with* MR. THORKELSON). But, Uncle Chris, I want to introduce Mr. Thorkelson . . .

(UNCLE CHRIS *ignores her, continuing to crank.* TRINA *returns crestfallen into the room with* MR. THORKELSON. MAMA *enters up* L., *wearing her hat and coat and carrying a cheap little overnight case.*)

MAMA. Jenny—Trina, we go to hospital. (*She goes to* KATRIN *and* CHRISTINE.) You will be good children until mama comes home ?

KATRIN, CHRISTINE (*together*). Sure, Mama.

UNCLE CHRIS (*calling from the car*). Marta, we go !

MAMA (*calling*). I come ! (*She turns to the children again.*) There is milk in the cooler, and fruit and cookies for your lunch.

CHRISTINE. We'll be all right, Mama. Don't worry.

MAMA. I go now. (*She starts for the door.*)

SIGRID (*stopping her*). Marta !

MAMA. What is it ?

SIGRID. You *can't* go in his automobile.

MAMA. Why not ?

UNCLE CHRIS (*calling*). Marta, we go !

MAMA. I come !

SIGRID. Because—because *she's* in it. The—the woman !

MAMA. So it will kill me, or Dagmar, if we sit in the automobile with her ? I have see her. She looks nice woman. (*Calling off, as she goes.*) I come ! (*She goes out* L. *into the street.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. We go !

(MAMA *climbs into the rear of the car, which backs noisily off during the next speeches.*)

MR. THORKELSON (*in a low whisper to* TRINA). Is that woman his wife ?

TRINA (*nervously*). Yes . . .

MR. THORKELSON. Yes ?

TRINA (*whispering back, loudly*). No !

JENNY (*to* KATRIN *and* CHRISTINE). Don't stand there gaping like that, girls. (*She shoos them into the pantry.*) Go away ! Go away !

(KATRIN *and* CHRISTINE *go out up* R. JENNY *turns and sees the disappearing car through the open door.*)

Oh ! They've gone ! We go after them ! Sigrid, you lead the way.

(*She gives* SIGRID *a push.* SIGRID *goes out* L. JENNY *follows dragging* MR. THORKELSON, *and* TRINA *comes last.*

BLACKOUT. *The* TABS *close.*

6. *The* LIGHT *comes up on the* R. *turntable, representing a kind of closet-room. Roller-skates are hanging on the wall.* KATRIN *is seated on the floor and* CHRISTINE *on a small kitchen stepladder. They each have a glass of milk and a plate of biscuits.*)

KATRIN. How long have they been gone now ?

CHRISTINE. About three hours. And I wish you wouldn't keep asking that.

KATRIN. How long do operations take ? I heard aunt Sigrid telling about Mrs. Bergman who was five hours on the table.

CHRISTINE. Aunt Sigrid's friends always have everything worse than anyone else. And it gets worse each time she tells it, too.

(KATRIN *smiles, drinks some milk and eats a biscuit.*)

KATRIN (*with a certain melancholy enjoyment*). The house feels lonesome, doesn't it—without mama ? It's like in a book. " The sisters sat huddled in the empty house, waiting for the verdict that was to spell life or death to the little family."

CHRISTINE. Oh, don't talk such nonsense.

KATRIN. It's not nonsense.

CHRISTINE. It is, too. In the first place, we're not a little family. We're a big one. And who said anything about life or death, anyway ? Always trying to make everything so dramatic !

KATRIN. Well, it *is* dramatic.

CHRISTINE. It's not. It's just . . . well, worrying. But you don't have to make a tragedy out of it.

(*There is a pause.*)

KATRIN. You're not eating anything.

CHRISTINE. I know that.

KATRIN. You're not drinking your milk, either. Aren't you hungry ?

CHRISTINE. No. And you wouldn't be, either, if you'd any feeling for mama and Dagmar, instead of just heartlessly sitting there eating and enjoying making a story out of it.

KATRIN. Oh, Chris, I'm not heartless. I do have feeling for them. I can't help it if it goes into words like that. Everything always does with me. But it doesn't mean I don't feel it. And I think we *ought* to eat. I think mama would want us to.

(*Pause.* CHRISTINE *hesitates a moment, then takes a bite of biscuit. They both eat in silence. The* LIGHT *dims on them, and the turntable revolves out.*

7. *The* TABS *open on the hospital corridor. The back wall of the corridor runs diagonally from up* R. *to down* L. *At the downstage end is the lift-door. Immediately above this is a bench, on which*

MAMA *and* NELS *are sitting holding hands. Above the bench is a cupboard for brooms and mops. There is a reception desk, behind which a* NURSE *is sitting, at* R.C. *Down* R. SIGRID, JENNY *and* TRINA *are haranging* UNCLE CHRIS. MR. THORKELSON *stands slightly behind them.*)

SIGRID. But, Uncle Chris, I tell you I must see him !

UNCLE CHRIS (*storming*). You don't understand English ? No visitors for twenty-four hours.

SIGRID. But *you've* seen him.

UNCLE CHRIS. I am not visitor. I am exception.

SIGRID. Well, then, his mother should be an exception, too. I'll see the doctor.

UNCLE CHRIS. *I* have seen doctor. I have told him you are not goot for Arne.

SIGRID Not good for my own son . . .

UNCLE CHRIS. Not goot at all. You cry over him. I go now.

(*He starts to go, but* JENNY *pushes* TRINA *foward.*)

TRINA (*with desperate courage*). Uncle Chris . . . Uncle Chris . . . I *must* speak to you.

UNCLE CHRIS. I have business.

TRINA. But, Uncle Chris—I want to get married.

UNCLE CHRIS. Well, then *get* married. (*He starts off again.*)

TRINA. No, wait, I—I want to marry Mr. Thorkelson. Here. (*She produces him from behind her.*) Peter, this is uncle Chris. Uncle Chris, this is Mr. Thorkelson.

UNCLE CHRIS (*staring at* MR. THORKELSON). So ?

MR. THORKELSON. How are you, sir ?

UNCLE CHRIS. Busy. (*He turns again.*)

TRINA. Please, Uncle Chris . . .

UNCLE CHRIS. What is ? You want to marry him ? All right, marry him. I have other things to think about.

TRINA (*eagerly*). Then—then you give your permission ?

UNCLE CHRIS. Yes, I give my permission. If you want to be a fool, I cannot stop you.

TRINA (*gratefully*). Oh, thank you, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. So. Is all ?

TRINA (*anxious to escape*). Yes, I think is all.

JENNY (*firmly*). No !

UNCLE CHRIS. No ?

(MR. THORKELSON *is pushed forward again.*)

MR. THORKELSON. Well, there—there was a little something else. You see, Trina mentioned . . . well, in the old country, it was always usual . . . and after all, we do all come from the old country . . .

UNCLE CHRIS. What is it ? What you want ?

MR. THORKELSON. Well, it's a question of Trina's . . . well, not to mince matters . . . her dowry.

UNCLE CHRIS (*shouting*). Her what ?

MR. THORKELSON (*very faintly*). Her dowry . . .

UNCLE CHRIS. Ah. Her dowry. Trina wants a dowry. She is forty-two years old . . .

TRINA (*interrupting*). No, Uncle Chris . . .

UNCLE CHRIS (*without pausing*). And it is not enough she gets husband. She must have dowry.

NURSE (*who has been trying to interrupt, banging on her desk and moving down* R.). *Please* ! Would you mind going and discussing your family matters somewhere else ? This is a hospital, not a marriage bureau.

(UNCLE CHRIS *glares at the* NURSE.)

UNCLE CHRIS (*turning to* MR. THORKELSON). You come into waiting room. I talk to you about dowry.

(*He strides off into the darkness behind the* NURSE'S *desk.* MR. THORKELSON, *with an appealing look back at* TRINA, *follows him. The* AUNTS *now remember* MAMA, *sitting on the bench, and cross to her.*)

JENNY. Did you hear that, Marta ?

MAMA (*out of a trance*). What ?

JENNY. Uncle Chris.

MAMA. No, I do not hear. I wait for doctor. Is two hours since they take Dagmar to operating room. More.

SIGRID. Two hours ? That's nothing ! When Mrs. Bergman had her gall bladder removed she was *six* hours on the table.

MAMA. Sigrid, I do not want to hear about Mrs. Bergman. I do not want to hear about anything. I wait for doctor. Please, you go away now. You come this evening.

TRINA. But, Marta, you can't stay here all by yourself.

MAMA. I have Nels. Please, Trina . . . I wait for doctor . . . you go now.

JENNY. We go.

TRINA. Oh, but I must wait for Peter and uncle Chris . . .

JENNY. We'll go next door and have some coffee. Sigrid, do you have money ?

SIGRID. Yes, I—I have a little.

JENNY. Good. Then I treat you. We'll be next door if you want us, Marta.

(MAMA *nods without looking at them, her eyes still fixed on the lift door. The* AUNTS *leave, going down the steps from the stage as though they were the hospital steps, and off* L. *For a moment, the stage is quiet. Then a* CHARWOMAN *enters down* R. *She carries a mop and pail, puts it into the cupboard, and then goes. The lift door opens and a doctor in a white coat comes out, followed by an orderly, carrying a tray of dressings. They disappear up* R. *behind the desk.* MAMA *rises, agitatedly, looking after them. Then* DR.

JOHNSON *enters down* R. *carrying his hat and bag. He sees* MAMA *and crosses to her.*)

DOCTOR. Oh, Mrs. Hanson . . .

MAMA. Doctor . . .

DOCTOR. Well, Dagmar's fine. She came through it beautifully. She's back in bed now, sleeping off the anesthetic.

MAMA. Thank you, Doctor. (*She shakes hands with him.*)

DOCTOR. You're very welcome.

MAMA. Is good of you, Doctor. (*She shakes hands with him again.*) Where is she ? I go to her now.

DOCTOR. Oh, I'm sorry, but I'm afraid that's against the rules. You shall see her to-morrow.

MAMA. To-morrow ? But, Doctor, she is so little. When she wakes she will be frightened.

DOCTOR. The nurse will take care of her. Excellent care. You needn't worry. You see, for the first twenty-four hours, clinic patients aren't allowed to see visitors. The wards must be kept quiet.

MAMA. I will not make a sound.

DOCTOR. I'm very sorry. To-morrow. And now . . . (*he glances at his watch*) good afternoon.

(*He puts on his hat and goes down the steps and off* L. MAMA *stands still a moment, looking after him.*)

MAMA. Come, Nels. We go find Dagmar.

NELS. But, Mama, the doctor said . . .

MAMA. We find Dagmar. (*She looks vaguely around her. Then goes to the* NURSE'S *desk.*) You tell me, please, where I can find my daughter ?

NURSE. What name ?

MAMA. Dagmar.

NELS. Dagmar Hanson.

NURSE (*looking at her record book*). Hanson, Ward A. Along there. (*She points upstage.*)

(MAMA *starts upstage.*)

Oh, just a moment.

(MAMA *returns.*)

When did she come in ?

MAMA. This morning. They just finish operation.

NURSE. Oh, well, then, I'm afraid you can't see her to-day. No visitors for the first twenty-four hours.

MAMA. I'm not a visitor. I am her Mama.

NURSE. I'm sorry, but it's against the rules.

MAMA. Just for one minute. Please.

NURSE. I'm sorry, but it's against the rules.

(MAMA *stands staring.* NELS *touches her arm. She looks at him, nods, trying to smile, then turns and walks with him to* L. *and down the steps.*)

MAMA. We must think of some way.

NELS. Mama, they'll let you see her to-morrow. They said so.

MAMA. If I don't see her to-day how will I know that all is well with her? What can I tell Papa when he comes home from work?

NELS. The nurses will look after her, Mama. Would you like to come next door for some coffee?

MAMA (*shaking her head*). We go home. We have coffee at home. But I must see Dagmar to-day.

(*She plods off* L. *with* NELS. *The* TABS *close.*)

8. *The* LIGHT *comes up on the* R. *turntable, representing a waiting-room.* UNCLE CHRIS *is seated on a bench,* R., *and* MR. THORKELSON *is seated on a chair,* L. *There is a table with a potted plant between them. A clock on the wall tells the time as* 2-30.)

UNCLE CHRIS. Well, it comes then to this. You love my niece, Trina?

(MR. THORKELSON, *very scared, gulps and nods.*)

You want to marry her?

(MR. THORKELSON *nods again.*)

You are in position to support her?

(MR. THORKELSON *nods again.*)

Why, then, you want dowry? (*No answer. He shouts.*) What for you want dowry?

MR. THORKELSON. Well—well, it would be a nice help. And it is customary.

UNCLE CHRIS. Is not customary. Who give dowries? Parents. Why? Because they are so glad they will not have to support their daughters any more, they pay money. I do not support Trina. I do not care if Trina gets married. Why then should I pay to have her married?

MR. THORKELSON. I never thought of it like that.

UNCLE CHRIS. Is insult to girl to pay dowry. If I do not give dowry, will you still marry Trina?

MR. THORKELSON. I—I don't know.

UNCLE CHRIS. You don't know? You don't know? You think I let Trina marry a man who will not take her without dowry?

MR. THORKELSON. No, I suppose you wouldn't.

UNCLE CHRIS. What kind of man would that be? I ask you, what kind of man would that be?

MR. THORKELSON (*fascinated—helpless*). Well, not a very nice kind of man.

UNCLE CHRIS. And are you that kind of man?

MR. THORKELSON. I—I don't think so.

UNCLE CHRIS (*conclusively*). Then you don't want dowry!

MR. THORKELSON (*giving up*). No, I . . . I guess I don't.

UNCLE CHRIS (*slapping his back*). Goot. Goot. You are goot man. I like you. I give you my blessing. And I send you vedding present. I send you box of oranges ! (*He shakes* MR. THORKELSON *boisterously by the hand.*)

(BLACKOUT. *The turntable revolves out.*

9. *The* TABS *open on the kitchen. It is empty.* MAMA *and* NELS *come up the hill from the* L. *and let themselves into the house. There is silence as they take off their hats and coats.*)

MAMA (*coming down* L. *; after a moment*). Where are the girls ?

NELS. I guess they're upstairs. (*He goes to door up* L. *and calls.*) Chris ! Katrin !

KATRIN, CHRISTINE (*together*). Coming !

NELS. Shall I make you some coffee ? (*He crosses to the door up* R.)

(MAMA *shakes her head.*)

You said you'd have coffee when you got home.

MAMA (*sitting on the bench below the table*). Later. First I must think.

NELS (*coming down* R.). Mama, please don't worry like that. Dagmar's all right. You know she's all right.

(KATRIN *and* CHRISTINE *enter up* L.)

CHRISTINE (*trying to be casual,* R. *of the table*). Well, Mama, everything all right ?

MAMA (*nodding*). Is all right. You have eaten ?

KATRIN (L. *of the table*). Yes, Mama.

MAMA. You drink your milk ?

CHRISTINE. Yes, Mama.

MAMA. Is good.

CHRISTINE (*seeing her face*). Mama, something's the matter.

KATRIN (*over-dramatically*). Mama, Dagmar's not—— ? She isn't—— ? Mama !

MAMA. No, Dagmar is fine. The doctor say she is fine. (*She rises.*) What is time ?

NELS. It's three o'clock.

MAMA. Three hours till papa come home.

(*She looks around and then goes slowly out into the pantry, up* R.)

KATRIN (*crossing to* NELS). Nels, what is it ? There *is* something the matter.

NELS. They wouldn't let mama see Dagmar. It's a rule of the hospital.

CHRISTINE. But Dagmar's all right ?

NELS. Oh, yes, she's all right.

CHRISTINE (*impatiently*). Well, then . . . !

NELS. But mama's very upset. She started talking to me in Norwegian in the street-car.

KATRIN (*emotionally*). What can we do ?

CHRISTINE (*coldly*). You can't do anything. When *will* they let her see Dagmar ?

NELS. To-morrow.

CHRISTINE. Well, then, we'll just have to wait till to-morrow.

KATRIN. Chris, how can you be so callous ? Can't you see that mama's heart is breaking ?

CHRISTINE. No. I can't. And you can't, either. People's hearts don't break.

KATRIN. They do, too.

CHRISTINE. Only in books.

(MAMA *enters up* R. *She wears an apron, and carries a scrubbing brush and a bucket of hot water.*)

Why, Mama, what are you going to do ?

MAMA (*coming down* R. *of the table*). I scrub the floor. (*She gets down on her knees, facing front.*)

CHRISTINE. But you scrubbed it yesterday.

MAMA. I scrub it again. (*She starts to do so.*)

KATRIN. But, Mama . . .

MAMA (*bending low*). Comes a time when you've got to get down on your knees.

KATRIN (*to* CHRISTINE). Now do you believe me ?

(CHRISTINE, *suddenly unendurably moved, turns and rushes from the room, by the door up* L.)

NELS. Mama, don't. Please don't. You must be tired.

KATRIN (*strangely*). Let her alone, Nels.

(*They stand in silence watching her scrub. Suddenly* MAMA *stops.*)

What is it, Mama ? What is it ?

MAMA (*sitting on her haunches*). I tink of something ! (*Slowly.*) I tink of something !

(*The* LIGHTS *dim and the* TABS *close on the kitchen.*

10. UNCLE CHRIS *is heard singing from down* L. *The* LIGHTS *slowly come up on the* L. *turntable, showing* ARNE, *a child of about eight, in a hospital bed.* UNCLE CHRIS *is seated on a chair beside the bed.*)

UNCLE CHRIS (*singing*).

" Ten t'ousand Svedes vent t'rough de veeds
At de battle of Coppen-hagen.
Ten t'ousand Svedes vent t'rough de veeds
Chasing vun Nor-ve-gan ! "

ARNE. Uncle Chris !

UNCLE CHRIS. Yes, Arne ?

ARNE. Uncle Chris, does it *have* to hurt like this ?

UNCLE CHRIS. If you vant it to be vell, and not to valk alvays like uncle Chris, it does—for a little. Is very bad ?

ARNE. It is—kinda . . . Oo—oo . . . !

UNCLE CHRIS. Arne, don't you know any svear vords ?

ARNE. W-what ?

UNCLE CHRIS. Don't you know any svear vords ?

ARNE. N-no, Uncle Chris. Not real ones.

UNCLE CHRIS. Then I tell you two fine vons to use when pain is bad. Are " Damn " and " Damittohell." You say them.

ARNE. N-now ?

UNCLE CHRIS. No, not now. When pain comes again. You say them then. They help plenty. I know. I haf pain, too. I say them all the time. And if pain is *very* bad, you say, "*God*damittohell." But only if is *very* bad. Is bad now ?

ARNE. No, it's—it's a little better.

UNCLE CHRIS. You sleep some now, maybe ?

ARNE. I'll try. Will—will you stay here, Uncle Chris ?

UNCLE CHRIS. Sure. Sure. I stay here. You are not frightened of uncle Chris ?

ARNE. No. Not any more.

UNCLE CHRIS. Goot. Goot. You like I sing some more ?

ARNE. If you wouldn't mind. But maybe something a little . . . well, quieter.

UNCLE CHRIS (*tenderly*). Sure. Sure.

(*He begins quietly to sing a Norwegian lullaby, in the midst,* ARNE *cries out.*)

ARNE. Oo—oo . . . Oh, *damn.* Damn. Damittohell !

UNCLE CHRIS (*delighted*). Goot. It helps—eh ?

ARNE (*with pleased surprise*). Yes—yes.

UNCLE CHRIS. Then you sleep some ! (*He fixes* ARNE'S *pillows for him, and resumes the lullaby, seated on his chair beside the bed. After another verse, he leans over, assuring himself that the child is asleep, and then very quietly, without interrupting his singing, takes a flask from his pocket and lifts it to his lips.*)

(*The* LIGHTS *dim and the turntable revolves out.*

11. *The* TABS *open on the hospital corridor. There is a different* NURSE *now at the reception desk. She is talking on the telephone.* MAMA *and* KATRIN *enter down* L. *and go up the steps.*)

MAMA (*in an undertone*). Is not the same nurse. Katrin, you take my hat and coat. (*She takes them off, revealing that she still wears her apron.*)

KATRIN. But, Mama, won't they . . .

MAMA (*interrupting, finger to lips*). Ssh ! You let me go ahead. You wait on bench for me.

(*She goes to the cupboard door above the bench and opens it.* KATRIN *stares after her in trepidation.* MAMA *takes out a damp mop and pail, and gets down on her knees by the nurse's desk, starting to clean the floor. The* NURSE *looks up, and* MAMA *catches her eye.*)

(*Brightly.*) Very dirty floors.

NURSE. Yes, I'm glad they've finally decided to clean them. Aren't you working late ?

MAMA (*quickly, lowering her head*). Floors need cleaning.

(*She pushes her way, crawling on hands and knees, up behind the desk, and disappears up the corridor, still scrubbing.* KATRIN *steals to the bench, and sits, still clutching* MAMA'S *hat and coat, looking interestedly around her. The* LIGHTS *dim, leaving her in a single spot, as she starts to talk to herself.*)

KATRIN (*to herself*). " The Hospital " . . . A poem by Katrin Hanson. (*She starts to improvise.*)

" She waited, fearful in the hall,
And held her bated breath."

Breath—yes, that'll rhyme with death. (*She repeats the first two lines.*)

" She waited fearful in the hall
And held her bated breath.
She trembled at the least footfall,
And kept her mind on death."

(*She takes a piece of paper and a pencil from her pocket and begins to scribble. A* NURSE *comes out of the elevator, carrying some charts, which she takes to the desk, and then goes out down* R. KATRIN *goes on with her poem.*)

" Ah, God, 'twas agony to wait.
To wait and watch and wonder . . . "

Wonder—under—bunder—funder—sunder. Sunder ! (*She nods to herself and goes on again.*)

" To wait and watch and wonder,
About her infant sister's fate.
If Death life's bonds would sunder."

(*Then to herself again, looking front.*) That's beautiful. Yes, but it isn't true. Dagmar isn't dying. It's funny—I don't want her to die—and yet when mama said she was all right I was almost—well, almost disappointed. It wasn't exciting any more. Maybe Christine's right, and I haven't any heart. How awful ! " The girl without a heart." That'd be a nice title for a story. " The girl without a heart sat in the hospital corridor . . . "

(*The* LIGHTS *come up again.* UNCLE CHRIS *appears, up* R. *behind the desk. He wears his hat and is more than a little drunk. He sees* KATRIN.)

UNCLE CHRIS (*crossing towards* KATRIN). Katrinë ! What you do here ? (*He sits on the bench beside her.*)

KATRIN (*nervously*). I'm waiting for mama.

UNCLE CHRIS. Where is she ?

KATRIN (*scared*). I—I don't know.

UNCLE CHRIS. What you mean—you don't know ?

KATRIN (*whispering*). I think—I think she's seeing Dagmar.

UNCLE CHRIS (*shaking his head*). Is first day. They do not allow visitors first day.

KATRIN (*trying to make him aware of the* NURSE). I know. But I think that's where she is.

UNCLE CHRIS. Where is Dagmar ?

KATRIN. I don't know.

(UNCLE CHRIS *rises and goes to the* NURSE *at the desk.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. In what room is my great-niece, Dagmar Hanson ?

NURSE (*looking at her book*). Hanson . . . Hanson . . . when did she come in ?

UNCLE CHRIS. This morning.

NURSE. Oh, yes. Were you wanting to see her ?

UNCLE CHRIS. What room is she in ?

NURSE. I asked were you wanting to see her.

UNCLE CHRIS. And *I* ask what room she is in.

NURSE. We don't allow visitors the first day.

UNCLE. Have I said I vant to visit her ? I ask what room she is in.

NURSE. Are you by any chance, Mr. —— (*looking at her book*) Halvorsen ?

UNCLE CHRIS (*proudly, and correcting her pronunciation*). Christopher Halvorsen.

NURSE. Did you say you were her uncle ?

UNCLE CHRIS. Her great-uncle.

NURSE. Well, then, I'm afraid I can't tell you anything about her.

UNCLE CHRIS. Why not ?

NURSE. Orders.

UNCLE CHRIS. Whose orders ?

NURSE. Dr. Johnson's. There's a special note here. Patient's uncle, Mr. Halvorsen, not to be admitted or given information under any circumstances.

UNCLE CHRIS (*after a moment's angry stupefaction*). Goddamit-

tohell ! (*He strides away down* L., *taking out his flask, and shaking it, only to find it empty.*)

(MAMA *enters up* R., *carrying the mop and pail, walking now and smiling triumphantly.*)

MAMA (*to the* NURSE). Thank you. (*She replaces the mop and pail in the closet, and then sees* UNCLE CHRIS. *She crosses to him.*) Uncle Chris, Dagmar is fine !

UNCLE CHRIS (*amazed*). You see her ?

MAMA. Sure, Uncle Chris, I see her.

UNCLE CHRIS (*reiterating ; incredulous*). You see Dagmar ?

MAMA. Sure. (*She takes her hat from* KATRIN *and starts to put it on.*) Is fine hospital. But such floors ! A mop is never good. Floors should be scrubbed with a brush. We go home. Uncle Chris, you come with us ? I make coffee.

UNCLE CHRIS (*joining them in a little group on the steps down* L.). Pah ! Vot goot is coffee ! I go get drink.

MAMA (*reprovingly*). Uncle Chris !

UNCLE CHRIS. Marta, you are fine woman. Fine. But I go get drink. I get drunk.

MAMA (*quickly aside to* KATRIN). His leg hurts him.

UNCLE CHRIS. And you do not make excuses for me ! I get drunk because I like it.

MAMA (*conciliating him*). Sure, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS (*shouting*). I like it ! (*Then, with a change.*) No, is not true. You know is not true. I do not like to get drunk at all. But I do not like to come home with you, either. (*Growing slightly maudlin.*) You have family. Is fine thing. You do not know how fine. Katrinë, one day when you grow up, maybe you know what a fine thing family is. I haf no family.

KATRIN (*on the lower step*). But, Uncle Chris, mama's always said you were the *head* of the family.

UNCLE CHRIS. Sure. Sure. I am head of the family, but I haf no family. So I go get drunk. You understand, Marta ?

MAMA. Sure, Uncle Chris. You go get drunk. (*Sharply.*) But don't you feel sorry for yourself !

(UNCLE CHRIS *glares at her a moment, then strides down the steps and off* R., *boisterously singing his song of "Ten Thousand Swedes."* MAMA *watches him go, then takes her coat from* KATRIN.)

Is fine man. Has fine ideas about family.

(KATRIN *helps her on with her coat.*)

I can tell papa now that Dagmar is fine. She wake while I am with her. I explain rules to her. She will not expect us now until to-morrow afternoon.

KATRIN. You won't try and see her again before that ?

MAMA (*gravely*). No. That would be against the rules ! Come. We go home.

(KATRIN *and* MAMA *go off* L.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

12. *When the* CURTAIN *rises,* KATRIN *is at her desk on the* R. *turntable.*

KATRIN (*reading*). " It wasn't very often that I could get mama to talk—about herself, or her life in the old country, or what she felt about things. You had to catch her unawares, or when she had nothing to do, which was very, very seldom. I don't think I can ever remember seeing mama unoccupied." (*She lays down the manuscript and looks out front.*) I do remember one occasion, though. It was the day before Dagmar came home from the hospital. And as we left, mama suggested treating me to an ice-cream soda. (*She rises, gets her hat from beside her—a school-girl hat—puts it on and crosses to* C. *while she speaks the next lines.*) She had never done such a thing before, and I remember how proud it made me feel—just to sit and talk to her quietly like a grown-up person. It was a kind of special treat-moment in my life that I'll always remember—quite apart from the soda, which was *wonderful.* (*She is now* C.)

(MAMA *enters* C. *through the* TABS *and comes down the steps.*)

MAMA. Katrin, you like we go next door, and I treat you to an ice-cream soda ?

KATRIN (*young now, and overcome*). Mama—do you mean it ?

MAMA. Sure. We celebrate. We celebrate that Dagmar is well, and coming home again.

13. (*They cross* L., *where the turntable represents a drugstore, with a table and two chairs at which they seat themselves.* MAMA *is* L. *of the table.*)

What you like to have, Katrin ?

KATRIN (*with desperate earnestness*). I think a chocolate . . . no, a strawberry . . . no, a chocolate soda.

MAMA (*smiling*). You are sure ?

KATRIN (*gravely*). I think so. But, Mama, can we *afford* it ?

MAMA. I think this once we can afford it.

(*The* SODA CLERK *appears from* L.)

SODA CLERK. What's it going to be, ladies ?

MAMA. A chocolate ice-cream soda, please—and a cup of coffee.

(*The* SODA CLERK *goes.*)

KATRIN. Mama, he called us " ladies " !

(MAMA *smiles.*)

Why aren't you having a soda, too ?

MAMA. Better I like coffee.

KATRIN. When can I drink coffee ?

MAMA. When you are grown up.

KATRIN. When I'm eighteen ?

MAMA. Maybe before that.

KATRIN. When I graduate ?

MAMA. Maybe. I don't know. Comes the day you are grown up. Papa and I will know.

KATRIN. Is coffee really nicer than a soda ?

MAMA. When you are grown up, it is.

KATRIN. Did you used to like sodas better—before your were grown up ?

MAMA. We didn't have sodas before I was grown up. It was in the old country.

KATRIN (*incredulous*). You mean they don't have sodas in Norway ?

MAMA. Now, maybe. Now I think they have many things from America. But not when I was little girl.

(*The* SODA CLERK *brings the soda and the coffee.*)

SODA CLERK. There you are, folks.

(*He sets them down and departs.*)

KATRIN (*after a good pull at the soda*). Mama, do you ever want to go back to the old country ?

MAMA. I like to go back once to look, maybe. To see the mountains and the fjords. I like to show them once to you all. When Dagmar is big, may be we all go back once—one summer—like tourists. But that is how it would be. I would be tourist there now. There is no one I would know any more. And maybe we see the little house where papa and I live when we first marry. And—— (*her eyes grow misty and reminiscent*) something else I would look at.

KATRIN. What is that ?

(MAMA *does not answer.*)

What would you look at, Mama ?

MAMA. Katrin, you do not know you have brother ? Besides Nels ?

KATRIN. No ! A brother ? In Norway ? Mama . . .

MAMA. He is my first baby. I am eighteen when he is born.

KATRIN. Is he there now ?

MAMA (*simply*). He is dead.

KATRIN (*disappointed*). Oh. I thought you meant . . . I thought you meant a real brother. A long-lost one, like in stories. When did he die ?

MAMA. When he is two years old. It is his grave I would like to see again. (*She is suddenly near tears, biting her lip and stirring her coffee violently, spilling some. She gets her handkerchief from her*

handbag, dabs at her skirt, then briefly at her nose, then she returns the handkerchief and turns to KATRIN *again. Matter-of-factly.*) Is good, your ice-cream soda ?

KATRIN (*more interested now in* MAMA *than in it*). Yes. Mama —have you had a very *hard* life ?

MAMA (*surprised*). Hard ? No. No life is easy all the time. It is not meant to be. (*She pours the spilled coffee back from the saucer into her cup.*)

KATRIN. But—rich people—aren't *their* lives easy ?

MAMA. I don't know, Katrin. I have never known rich people. But I see them sometimes in stores and in the streets, and they do not *look* as if they were easy.

KATRIN. Wouldn't you like to be rich ?

MAMA. I would like to be rich the way I would like to be ten feet high. Would be good for some things—bad for others.

KATRIN. But didn't you come to America to *get* rich ?

MAMA (*shocked*). No. We come to America because they are all here—all the others. Is good for families to be together.

KATRIN. And did you like it right away ?

MAMA. Right away. When we get off the ferry boat and I see San Francisco and all the family, I say : " Is like Norway," only it is better than Norway. And then you are all born here, and I become American citizen. But not to get rich.

KATRIN. *I* want to be rich. Rich and famous. I'd buy you your warm coat. When are you going to get that coat, Mama ?

MAMA. Soon now, maybe—when we pay doctor, and Mr. Hyde pay his rent. I think now I *must* ask him. I ask him to-morrow, after Dagmar comes home.

KATRIN. When I'm rich and famous, I'll buy you lovely clothes. White satin gowns with long trains to them. And jewellery. I'll buy you a pearl necklace.

MAMA. We talk too much ! (*She sighs to the* SODA CLERK *off-stage.*) Come, finish your soda. We must go home.

(*The* SODA CLERK *appears.*)

How much it is, please ?

SODA CLERK. Fifteen cents.

MAMA. Here are two dimes. You keep the nickel. And thank you. Was good coffee. (*They start up the steps towards the* TABS C.) To-morrow Dagmar will be home again. And, Katrin, you see Uncle Elizabeth is there. This afternoon again she was asking for him. You keep Uncle Elizabeth in the house all day until she comes home.

(*They disappear through the* TABS.

14. *After a second, the howls of a cat in pain are heard from behind the curtains low at first, then rising to a heart-rending volume,*

and then diminishing again as the TABS *part on the kitchen once more.* MAMA, PAPA *and* DAGMAR *are entering the house.*)

DAGMAR (*standing on the threshold, transfixed*). It's Uncle Elizabeth, welcoming me home! That's his song of welcome. Where is he, Mama? (*She looks around for the source of the howls.*)

MAMA (*taking off her coat and putting it on the chest*). He is in the pantry.

(DAGMAR *starts to rush off up* R.)

But wait—wait a minute, Dagmar. I must tell you. Uncle Elizabeth is—sick.

DAGMAR. Sick? What's the matter with him?

PAPA. He has been in fight. Last night. He come home this morning very sick indeed. (*He comes down* L., *takes off his coat and hat and puts them on the chest.*)

(DAGMAR *crosses to the pantry door, as* NELS *enters by it.*)

MAMA. Nels, how is Uncle Elizabeth? Nels has been doctoring him.

NELS. He's pretty bad, Mama. I've dressed all his wounds again with boric acid, but . . .

(DAGMAR *tries to get past him.*)

I wouldn't go and see him now, baby.

DAGMAR. I've got to. He's my cat. I haven't seen him in a whole month. More.

(*She runs out into the pantry.*)

MAMA (*coming above the table*). Nels, what you think?

NELS. I think we ought to have had him put away before she came home.

MAMA. But she would have been so unhappy if he was not here *at all.*

NELS. She'll be unhappier still if he dies.

(*Another howl is heard from the pantry, and then* DAGMAR *comes rushing back.*)

DAGMAR (*running to* MAMA). Mama, what happened to him? What happened to him? Oh, Mama—when I tried to pick them up, his bandage slipped over his eye. It was bleeding. Oh, Mama, it looked awful. Oh . . . (*She starts to cry.*)

MAMA (*fondling her*). He looks like that all over. Nels, you go to see to his eye again.

(*Wearily,* NELS *returns to the pantry.*)

Listen, Dagmar . . . *Lille Ven* . . .would it not be better for the poor thing to go quietly to sleep?

DAGMAR. You mean—go to sleep and never wake up again?

(MAMA *nods gently.*)

No.

PAPA. I think he die, anyway. Nels try to make him well. But I do not think he can.

DAGMAR. Mama can. Mama can do everything.

(*There is another howl from off-stage.* DAGMAR *clutches* MAMA *agonizedly.*)

Make him live, Mama. Make him well again. *Please*!

MAMA. We see. Let us see how he gets through the night. And now, Dagmar, you must go to bed. I bring you your supper.

DAGMAR. But you will fix Uncle Elizabeth? You promise, Mama?

MAMA. I promise I try. Go now.

(DAGMAR *goes out up* L.)

I must fix her supper.

(*She moves towards the pantry up* R. *There are more howls.* PAPA *and* MAMA *stand and look at one another.* NELS *enters up* R.)

NELS. Mama, it's just cruelty, keeping that cat alive.

MAMA. I know.

(*There is another howl, the longest yet.*)

PAPA. You say we see how the cat get through the night. I ask you how do *we* get through the night? Is no use, Marta. We must put the cat to sleep. Nels, you go to the drugstore, and get something. Some chloroform, maybe. (*He holds out a coin.*)

NELS. How much shall I get? (*He crosses to* PAPA *and takes the coin.*)

PAPA. You ask the man. You tell him it is for a cat. He knows.

(NELS *goes out* L. *and down the street into the wings, with a look at* MAMA'S *face.*)

Is best. Is the only thing.

MAMA. I know. But poor Dagmar. It is sad homecoming for her. And she has been so good in hospital. Never once she cry. (*She pulls herself together.*) I get her supper.

(*There is another howl.*)

And I take the cat outside. Right outside, where we . . . where *Dagmar* cannot hear him.

(*She goes out up* R. *into the pantry.* PAPA *takes a folded newspaper from his pocket, puts on his glasses and sits in the chair* L. *of the table. He starts to read. The door up* L. *opens gently and* MR. HYDE

peeps in. He wears his hat and coat and carries his suitcase and a letter. PAPA *has his back to him.* MR. HYDE *lays the letter on the dresser and then starts to tiptoe to the street door* L. *Then* PAPA *sees him.*)

PAPA. You go out, Mr. Hyde ?

MR. HYDE (*pretending surprise*). Oh . . . Oh, I did not see you, Mr. Hanson. (*He puts down the suitcase.*) I did not know you were back. As a matter of fact, I—I was about to leave this letter for you. (*He fetches it.*) The fact is—I—I have been called away.

PAPA. So ?

MR. HYDE. A letter I received this morning necessitates my departure. My immediate departure.

PAPA. I am sorry.

(MAMA *enters up* R. *with a tray, on which are milk, bread, butter and jelly.*)

Mama, Mr. Hyde says he goes away.

MAMA (*coming to the table with the tray*). Is true ?

MR. HYDE. Alas, dear madam, yes. 'Tis true, 'tis pity. And pity 'tis, 'tis true. You will find here—— (*he presents the letter*) my cheque for all I owe you, and a note expressing my profoundest thanks for all your most kind hospitality. You will say good-bye to the children for me ?

(*He bows.*)

MAMA (*taking the letter ; distressed*). Sure. Sure.

MR. HYDE (*bowing again*). Madam, my deepest gratitude.

(*He kisses her hand.* MAMA *looks astonished. He bows to* PAPA.)

Sir, my sincerest admiration ! (*He opens the street door.*) It has been a privilege. *Ave Atque Vale* ! Hail and farewell !

(*He makes a gesture and goes off.*)

MAMA. Was wonderful man ! Is too bad. (*She opens the letter, takes out the cheque.*)

PAPA. How much is cheque for ?

MAMA. Hundred ten dollar ! Is four months.

PAPA. Good. Good.

MAMA. Is wonderful. Now we pay doctor everything.

PAPA. And you buy your warm coat. With fur now, maybe.

MAMA (*sadly*). But there will be no more reading. You take the cheque, Lars. You get the money ?

PAPA (*taking it*). Sure. I get it. What does he say in his letter ?

MAMA. You read it while I fix supper for Dagmar. (*She starts to butter the bread, and spread jelly.*)

PAPA (*reading*). " Dear Friends—I find myself compelled to

take a somewhat hasty departure from this house of happiness . . . "

MAMA. Is beautiful letter.

PAPA. " I am leaving you my library for the children . . . "

MAMA. He leaves his books ?

PAPA. He says so.

MAMA. But is wonderful. Go see, Lars. See if they are in his room.

(PAPA *lays down the letter, rises and goes out up* L. NELS *and* CHRISTINE *appear down* L., *coming up the street.* CHRISTINE *carries some school books.*)

CHRISTINE. I'm sure it was him, Nels. Carrying his suitcase, and getting on the cable-car. I'm sure he's going away.

NELS. Well, I hope he's paid mama.

(*They open the street door* L.)

CHRISTINE (*bursting in*). Mama, I saw Mr. Hyde getting on the cable-car.

MAMA. I know. He leave.

CHRISTINE. Did he pay you ?

MAMA. Sure, he pay me. Hundred ten dollar . . .

NELS. Gee . . .

MAMA (*smiling*). Is good.

CHRISTINE. Are you going to put it in the Bank ?

MAMA. We need it right away.

(PAPA *enters up* L. *He staggers under an armful of books.*)

Mr. Hyde leaves his books, too. For you.

NELS. Say !

(PAPA *stacks them on the table.* NELS *and* CHRISTINE *rush to them and read the titles.*)

The Pickwick Papers, The Complete Shakespeare . . .

CHRISTINE. Alice in Wonderland, The Oxford Book of Verse . . .

NELS. The Last of the Mohicans, Ivanhoe . . .

CHRISTINE. We were right in the middle of that.

MAMA. Nels can finish it. He can read to us now in the evenings. He has fine voice, too, like Mr. Hyde.

(NELS *flushes with pleasure.*)

Is wonderful. So much we can learn. (*She finishes the supper-making.*) Christine, you take the butter back to the cooler for me, and the jelly, too.

(CHRISTINE *takes the butter and jelly and goes out up* R.)

I go up to Dagmar now. (*She lifts the tray, then pauses.*) You get it, Nels ?

NELS. What ? Oh . . . (*Taking a druggist's small bottle from his pocket.*) Here.

MAMA. You put it down. After I come back, we do it. You know how ?

NELS. Why, no, Mama, I . . . (*He puts the bottle on the table.*)

MAMA. You do not ask ?

NELS. No. I—I thought papa . . .

MAMA. You know, Lars ?

PAPA. No, I don't know. But it cannot be difficult. If you *hold* the cat . . .

(JENNY *enters down* L. *She comes up the street in a state of some excitement.*)

MAMA. And watch him die ? No ! I think better you get rags and a big sponge, to soak up the chloroform. You put it in the box with him, and cover him over. You get them ready out there.

NELS. Sure, Mama.

MAMA. I bring some blankets.

(NELS *goes out up* R. CHRISTINE *enters up* R. MAMA *lifts the tray and starts for the door up* L. JENNY *knocks on the street-door.*)

MAMA (*agitated*). So much goes on ! See who it is, Christine.

CHRISTINE (*crossing to the window and peeping*). It's aunt Jenny. (*She opens the door.*)

MAMA. Jenny . . .

JENNY (*breathless*). Marta—has he gone ?

MAMA (*above the table*). Who ?

JENNY (*coming* L. *of the table*). Your boarder—Mr. Hyde . . .

MAMA. Yes, he has gone. Why ?

JENNY. Did he pay you ?

MAMA. Sure he pay me.

JENNY. How ?

MAMA. He give me a cheque. Lars has it right there.

JENNY (*with meaning*). A cheque !

MAMA. Jenny, what is it ? Christine, you give Dagmar her supper. I come soon.

(CHRISTINE *takes the tray from* MAMA *and goes out up* L.)

What is it, Jenny ? How do you know that Mr. Hyde has gone ?

JENNY. I was at Mr. Kruper's down the street—you know, the restaurant and bakery—and he told me Mr. Hyde was there to-day having his lunch, and when he left he asked if he would cash a cheque for him. For fifty dollars. (*She pauses.*)

PAPA. Well, go on.

JENNY. Your fine Mr. Hyde didn't expect Mr. Kruper to take it to the bank until to-morrow, but he did. And what do you think ?

Mr. Hyde hasn't even an *account* at that bank !

(NELS *enters up* R. *and stands in the doorway.*)

MAMA. I don't understand.

PAPA (*taking the cheque from his pocket*). You mean the cheque is no good ?

JENNY. No good at all. (*Triumphantly.*) Your Mr. Hyde was a crook, just as I always thought he was, for all his reading and fine ways. Mr. Kruper said he'd been cashing them all over the neighbourhood.

(MAMA *stands quite still, without answering.*)

How much did he owe you ? Plenty, I'll bet. (*Still no answer.*) Eh ? Marta, I said I bet he owed you plenty. Didn't he ?

MAMA (*looks around, first at* NELS *and then down at the books on the table*). No. No, he owed us nothing. (*She takes the cheque from* PAPA *and tears it across.*) Nothing.

JENNY (*persistently*). How much was that cheque for ? (*She reaches her hand for it.*)

MAMA (*evading her*). It does not matter. He pay with better things than money. (*She goes to the stove, throws the cheque into the flames and watches it burn.*)

JENNY. I told you right in the beginning that you shouldn't trust him. But you were so sure—just like you always are. Mr. Hyde was a gentleman. A gentleman ! I bet it must have been a hundred dollars that he rooked you of. Wasn't it ?

MAMA (*returning to the table*). Jenny, I cannot talk now. Maybe you don't have things to do. I have.

JENNY (*sneeringly*). What ? What have *you* got to do that's so important ?

MAMA (*taking up the medicine bottle, fiercely*). I have to chloroform a cat !

(JENNY *steps back in momentary alarm, almost as though* MAMA *were referring to her.* MAMA *goes out up* L. *with the medicine bottle, not so very unlike Lady Macbeth with the daggers.*

BLACKOUT. *The* TABS *close.*

15. *After a moment, the* TABS *open again on the kitchen. It is next morning. The books have been taken off the table, and* MAMA *is setting the breakfast dishes, with* PAPA *helping her.* DAGMAR *comes bursting into the room up* L.)

DAGMAR. Good morning, Mama. 'Morning, Papa. Is Uncle Elizabeth all better ?

MAMA. Dagmar, there is something I must tell you.

DAGMAR. I want to see Uncle Elizabeth first.

(*She runs out up* R. MAMA *turns helplessly to* PAPA.)

MAMA. Do something ! Tell her !
PAPA. If we just let her think the cat die . . . by itself . . .
MAMA. No. We cannot tell her lies.

(PAPA *goes to the door up* R. *and opens it.*)

DAGMAR (*off*). What a funny, funny smell. Good morning, my darling, my darling Elizabeth.

(MAMA *and* PAPA *stand stricken.* DAGMAR *enters, carrying the cat, wrapped in an old shirt, with its head covered. She comes down* R. *of the table.*)

My goodness, you put enough blankets on him ! Did you think he'd catch cold ?

MAMA (*horror-stricken*). Dagmar, you must not . . . (*She stops at the sight of the cat, whose tail is twitching, quite obviously alive.*) Dagmar, let me see—let me see the cat ! (*She crosses to her, below the table, and uncovers the cat's head.*)

DAGMAR (*overjoyed*). He's well. Oh, Mama, I *knew* you'd fix him.

MAMA (*appalled*). But, Dagmar, I didn't. I . . .

DAGMAR (*ignoring her*). I'm going to take him right up and show him to Nels.

(*She runs off up* L.)

(*Off.*) Nels ! Nels ! Uncle Elizabeth's well again.

MAMA (*turning to* PAPA). Is a miracle ! (*She sits, dumbfounded, on the bench below the table.*)

PAPA (*coming down beside her, shrugging*). You cannot have used enough chloroform. You just give him good sleep, and that cures him. We rechristen the cat, Lazarus !

MAMA. But, Lars, we must tell her. Is not *good* to let her grow up believing I can fix *everything* !

PAPA. Is best thing in the world for her to believe. (*He chuckles.*) Besides, I know *exactly* how she feels. (*He lays his hand on hers.*)

MAMA (*rising and turning with embarrassment from his demonstrativeness and slapping his hand*). We finish getting breakfast. (*She turns back to the table.*)

(*The* TABS *close.*

16. *The* LIGHTS *on the stage down* R. *come up.* KATRIN *and* CHRISTINE *enter down* R. *They wear school clothes and hats.* CHRISTINE *carries some school books in a strap.* KATRIN *is reciting.*)

KATRIN. " The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath : it is twice blest ;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes . . . "

(*She dries up.*) " . . . him that takes. It blesseth him that gives and him that takes . . . " (*She turns to* CHRISTINE.) What comes after that ?

CHRISTINE. I don't know. And I don't care.

KATRIN. Why, Chris !

CHRISTINE. I don't. It's all I've heard for weeks. The school play, and your graduation, and going on to High. And never a thought of what's happening at home.

KATRIN. What do you mean ?

CHRISTINE. You see—you don't even know !

KATRIN. Oh, you mean the strike ?

CHRISTINE. Yes, I mean the strike. Papa hasn't worked for four whole weeks, and a lot you care. Why, I don't believe you even know what they're striking *for*. Do you ? All you and your friends can talk about is the presents you're going to get. You make me ashamed of being a girl.

(*Two girls*, MADELINE *and* DOROTHY, *enter* C., *through the* TABS, *talking.*)

MADELINE (*to* DOROTHY). Thyra Walsh's family's going to add seven pearls to the necklace they started for her when she was a baby. Oh, hello, Katrin ! Did you hear about Thyra's graduation present ?

KATRIN (*not very happily*). Yes, I heard.

MADELINE. I'm getting an onyx ring, with a diamond in it.

KATRIN. A real diamond ?

MADELINE. Yes, of course. A *small* diamond.

DOROTHY. What are *you* getting ?

KATRIN. Well—well, they haven't actually told me, but I think —I think I'm going to get that pink celluloid dresser set in your father's drugstore.

DOROTHY. You mean that one in the window ?

KATRIN (*to* MADELINE). It's got a brush and comb and mirror—and a hair-receiver. It's genuine celluloid !

DOROTHY. I wanted father to give it to me, out of stock, but he said it was too expensive. Father's an awful tightwad. They're giving me a bangle.

MADELINE. Oh, there's the street-car. We've got to fly. 'Bye, Katrin. 'Bye, Christine. See you to-morrow. Come on, Dorothy.

(DOROTHY *and* MADELINE *rush off* L.)

CHRISTINE. Who said you were going to get the dresser set ?

KATRIN. Nobody's said so—for certain. But I've sort of hinted, and . . .

CHRISTINE (*going up the steps*). Well, you're not going to get it.

KATRIN. How do you know ?

CHRISTINE (*turning*). Because I know what you *are* getting. I

heard mama tell aunt Jenny. Aunt Jenny said you were too young to appreciate it.

KATRIN. What is it ?

CHRISTINE. Mama's giving you her brooch. Her *solje.*

KATRIN. You mean that old silver thing she wears that belonged to grandmother ? What would I want an old thing like that for ?

CHRISTINE. It's an heirloom. Mama thinks a lot of it.

KATRIN. Well, then, she ought to keep it. You don't really mean that's *all* they're going to give me ?

CHRISTINE. What more do you want ?

KATRIN. I want the dresser set. My goodness, if mama doesn't realize what's a suitable present . . . why, it's practically the most important time in a girl's life, when she graduates.

CHRISTINE. And you say you're not selfish !

KATRIN. It's not selfishness.

CHRISTINE. Well, I don't know what else you'd call it. With papa not working, we need every penny we can lay our hands on. Even the Little Bank's empty. But you'll devil mama into giving you the dresser set somehow. So why talk about it ? I'm going home.

(*She turns and goes through the* TABS. KATRIN *stands alone with a set and stubborn mouth, and then sits on the steps.*)

KATRIN. Christine was right. I got the dresser set. They gave it to me just before supper on graduation night. Papa could not attend the exercises because there was a strike meeting to decide about going back to work. I was so excited that night I could hardly eat, and the present took the last remnants of my appetite clean away.

17. (*The* TABS *open on the kitchen.* PAPA, MAMA *and* DAGMAR *are seated at the table, with coffee.* CHRISTINE *is clearing dishes.*)

CHRISTINE. I'll just stack the dishes now, Mama. We'll wash them when we come home.

(*She goes out with them up* R.)

PAPA (R. *of the table. Holding up a cube of sugar*). Who wants coffee-sugar ? (*He dips it in his coffee.*) Dagmar ? (*He hands it to her.*) Katrin ?

(KATRIN *rises from the steps and moves up into the scene for the sugar.*)

MAMA (L. *of the table*). You get your coat, Katrin ; you need it.

(KATRIN *goes out up* L.)

DAGMAR (*above the table*). Aunt Jenny says if we drank black coffee like you do at our age, it would turn our complexions dark. I'd like to be a black Norwegian. Like uncle Chris. Can I, Papa ?

PAPA. I like you better blonde. Like mama.

DAGMAR. When do you get old enough for your complexion *not* to turn dark ? When can we drink coffee ?

PAPA. One day, when you are grown up.

(JENNY *and* TRINA *have entered down* L. *and move up to the street door* L. JENNY *knocks.*)

MAMA. There are Jenny and Trina. (*She rises and goes to the door.*) Is good. We can start now. (*She opens the door.*)

(JENNY *and* TRINA *enter.*)

JENNY. Well, are you all ready ? Is Katrin very excited ?

PAPA (*nodding*). She ate no supper.

(DAGMAR *rises and crosses down* L. MAMA *takes* DAGMAR'S *hat and coat from the chest and helps her on with them.* CHRISTINE *enters up* R. PAPA *gives her a dipped cube of sugar.* JENNY *and* TRINA *come to the up* L. *corner of the table.*)

JENNY. Is that *black* coffee you dipped that sugar in ? Lars, you shouldn't. It's not good for them. It'll . . .

PAPA (*finishing for her*). Turn their complexions black. I know. Well, maybe it is all right if we have *one* coloured daughter.

JENNY. Lars, really !

(KATRIN *enters up* L. *with her hat and coat.*)

KATRIN. Aunt Jenny, did you see my graduation present ? (*She crosses to the chair below the stove and gets it.*)

(CHRISTINE *gives* KATRIN *a disgusted look, and goes out up* L.)

(*She moves above the table and displays the dresser set.*) Look ! It's got a hair-receiver.

JENNY. But I thought—Marta, I thought you were going to give her . . .

MAMA. No, you were right, Jenny. She is too young to appreciate that. She like something more gay—more modern.

(*She takes her hat and coat from the chest and puts them on.*)

JENNY. H'm. Well, it's very pretty, I suppose, but . . . (*She looks up as* MAMA *puts on her coat.*) You're not wearing your *solje* !

MAMA (*quickly*). No. I do not wear it to-night. Come, Trina, we shall be late.

TRINA (*moving above the table* R.). Oh, but Peter isn't here yet.

MAMA. Katrin has her costume to put on. He can follow. Or do you like to wait for Peter ?

TRINA. I think—if you don't mind . . .

MAMA. You can stay with Lars. He does not have to go yet.

JENNY. I hope Katrin knows her part.

PAPA. Sure she knows it. *I* know it, too.

TRINA. It's too bad he can't see Katrin's début as an actress.

MAMA. You will be back before us, Lars ?

PAPA (*nodding*). I think the meeting will not last long.

MAMA. Is good. We go now.

(*She goes out* L. *with* JENNY *and* DAGMAR. *They come down the street and go off into the wings.* CHRISTINE *and* NELS *enter up* L. *and go out* L. *They wait outside the door for* KATRIN. KATRIN *puts on her hat and coat and picks up the dresser set.*)

PAPA (*to* TRINA). You like we play a game of checkers while we wait ?

TRINA (*sitting* R. *above the table*). Oh, I haven't played checkers in years.

PAPA. Then I beat you. (*He rises and moves up to the dresser to get the checker set.*)

(KATRIN *kisses* PAPA.)

KATRIN. Good-bye, Papa.

PAPA. Good-bye, daughter. I think of you.

KATRIN. I'll see you there, Aunt Trina.

TRINA. Good luck !

PAPA. I get the checkers.

(KATRIN *goes out* L., PAPA *gets the checker set from a cupboard under the dresser, brings it to the table and sets it up while the following scene is played outside in the street.*)

CHRISTINE (*contemptuously*). Oh, bringing your cheap trash with you to show off ?

KATRIN. It's not trash. It's beautiful. You're just jealous.

CHRISTINE. I told you you'd devil mama into giving it to you.

KATRIN. I didn't. I didn't devil her at all. I just showed it to her in Mr. Schiller's window . . .

CHRISTINE. And made her go and sell her brooch that her very own mother gave her.

KATRIN. What ?

NELS. Chris—you weren't supposed to tell that !

CHRISTINE. I don't care. I think she ought to know.

KATRIN. Is that true ? Did mama—Nels—— ?

NELS. Well, yes, as a matter of fact, she did. Now, come on.

KATRIN. No, no, I don't believe it. I'm going to ask papa.

NELS. You haven't time.

KATRIN. I don't care.

(*She rushes back to the house and dashes into the kitchen.* CHRISTINE *goes off down* L., NELS *follows her.*)

Papa—Papa—Christine says—— Papa, did Mama sell her brooch to give me this ? (*She comes above the table.*)

PAPA (*moving above the table*). Christine should not have told you that.

KATRIN. It's true, then ?

PAPA. She did not sell it. She traded it to Mr. Schiller for your present.

KATRIN (*near tears*). Oh, but she shouldn't. I never meant . . .

PAPA (*taking her by the shoulders*). Look, Katrin. You wanted the present. Mama wanted your happiness ; she wanted it more than she wanted the brooch.

KATRIN. But I never meant her to do *that*. (*Crying.*) She *loved* it so. It was all she had of grandmother's.

PAPA. She always meant it for you, Katrin. And you must not cry. You have your play to act.

KATRIN (*sobbing*). I don't want to act in it now.

PAPA. But you must. Your audience is waiting.

KATRIN (*as before*). I don't care.

PAPA. But you must care. To-night you are not Katrin any longer. You are an actress. And an actress must act, whatever she is feeling. There is a saying—what is it——

TRINA (*brightly*). The mails must go through !

PAPA. No, no. The show must go on. So stop your crying, and go and act your play. We talk of this later. Afterwards.

KATRIN (*pulling herself together*). All right, I'll go.

(*Sniffing a good deal, she picks up the dresser set and goes out into the street and off down* L. PAPA *and* TRINA *exchange glances.* PAPA *sits* R. *of the table and they settle down to their checkers.*)

PAPA. Now we play.

(*The* LIGHTS *fade. The* TABS *close.*

18. LIGHTS *come up on the* R. *turntable, representing a makeshift dressing-room.* DOROTHY *and* MADELINE *are dressing in costumes for "The Merchant of Venice."*)

DOROTHY. I'm getting worried about Katrin. If anything's happened to her . . .

MADELINE (*pulling up her tights*). I'll forget my lines. I know I will. I'll look out and see Miss Forrester sitting there, and forget every single line.

(KATRIN *rushes in from* L. *She carries the dresser set and places it on the dressing table.*)

We thought you'd had an accident, or something . . .

KATRIN. Dorothy, is your father here to-night ?

DOROTHY. He's going to be. Why ?

KATRIN. I want to speak to him. (*As she pulls off her hat and coat.*) Will you tell him—please—not to go away without speaking to me ? After. After the exercises.

DOROTHY. What on earth do you want to speak to father for ?

KATRIN. I've got something to say to him. Something to ask him. It's important. Very important.

MADELINE. Is that the dresser set? (*Picking it up.*) Can I look at it a minute?

KATRIN (*snatching it from her, violently*). No!

MADELINE. Why, what's the matter? I only wanted to look at it.

KATRIN (*emotionally*). You can't. You're not to touch it. Dorothy, you take it and put it where I can't see it. (*She thrusts it at her.*) Go on . . . Take it! Take it! Take it!

(BLACKOUT.

19. *The* TABS *open on the kitchen.* MAMA *and* PAPA *are in conclave at the table with cups of coffee.*)

MAMA (*seated above the table*). I am worried about her, Lars. When it is over, I see her talking with Mr. Schiller—and then she goes to take off her costume and Nels tells me that he will bring her home. But it is long time, and is late for her to be out. And in the play, Lars, she was not good. I have heard her practice it here, and she was good, but to-night, no. It was as if—as if she was thinking of something else all the time.

PAPA (*seated* R. *of the table*). I think maybe she was.

MAMA. But what? What can be worrying her?

PAPA. Marta—to-night, after you leave, Katrin found out about your brooch.

MAMA. My brooch? But how? Who told her?

PAPA. Christine.

MAMA (*angry*). Why?

PAPA. I do not know.

MAMA (*rising with a sterness we have not seen before, and calling*). Christine! Christine! (*She moves* L. *of the table*).

(CHRISTINE *enters up* R. *She is wiping a dish.*)

CHRISTINE. Were you calling me, Mama? (*She comes a little down* R.)

MAMA. Yes. Christine, did you tell Katrin to-night about my brooch?

CHRISTINE (*frightened, but firm*). Yes.

MAMA. Why did you?

CHRISTINE. Because I hated the smug way she was acting over that dresser set.

MAMA. Is no excuse. You make her unhappy. You make her not good in the play.

CHRISTINE. Well, she made you unhappy, giving up your brooch for her selfishness.

MAMA (*crossing towards* CHRISTINE, *above the table*). Is not your business. I choose to give my brooch. Is not for you to judge. And you know I do not want you to tell. I am angry with you, Christine.

CHRISTINE. I'm sorry. But I'm not sorry I told.

(*She goes back to the pantry up* R. *with a set, obstinate face.*)

PAPA. Christine is the stubborn one.

(NELS *and* KATRIN *have appeared down* L. *and moved up to the house. They stop and look at each other in the lamplight.* KATRIN *looks scared. Then* NELS *pats her, and she enters,* NELS *follows.* MAMA *looks up inquiringly and searchingly into* KATRIN'S *face.* KATRIN *turns away, taking off her hat and coat, and taking something from her pocket. She puts her hat and coat on the chest.*)

NELS (*crossing above the table*). What happened at the meeting, Papa?

PAPA. We go back to work to-morrow.

NELS. Gee, that's bully. Isn't it, Mama?

MAMA (*sitting* L. *of the table; absently*). Yes, is good.

KATRIN (*coming to* MAMA). Mama—here's your brooch. (*She gives it to her.*) I'm sorry I was so bad in the play. I'll go and help Christine with the dishes.

(*She turns and goes out up* R.)

MAMA (*unwrapping the brooch from tissue paper*). Mr. Schiller give it back to her?

NELS. We went to his house to get it. He didn't want to. He was planning to give it to his wife for her birthday. But Katrin begged and begged him. She even offered to go and work in his store during her vacation if he'd give it back.

PAPA (*impressed*). So? So?

MAMA. And what did Mr. Schiller say?

NELS. He said that wasn't necessary. But he gave her a job all the same. She's going to work for him, afternoons, for three dollars a week.

MAMA. And the dresser set—she gave that back?

NELS. Yes. She was awful upset, Mama. It was kinda hard for her to do. She's a good kid. Well, I'll say good night. I've got to be up early.

PAPA. Good night, Nels.

NELS. Good night, Papa.

(*He goes out up* L.)

MAMA. Good night, Nels.

PAPA. Nels is the kind one. (*He starts to re-fill* MAMA'S *coffee cup.*)

(MAMA *stops him, putting her hand over her cup.*)

No?

MAMA (*rising, crossing up* R. *and calling*). Katrin! Katrin!

(KATRIN *appears in the door up* R.)

KATRIN. Yes, Mama ?

MAMA (*sitting* R. *above the table*). Come here.

(KATRIN *comes to her.*)

(*She holds out the brooch.*) You put this on.

KATRIN. No—it's yours.

MAMA. It is your graduation present. I put it on for you. (*She pins the brooch on* KATRIN'S *dress.*)

KATRIN (*near tears*). I'll wear it always. I'll keep it for ever.

MAMA. Christine should not have told you.

KATRIN (*moving away down* R). I'm glad she did. Now.

PAPA. And I am glad, too. (*He dips a lump of sugar and holds it out to her.*) Katrin ?

KATRIN (*tearful again, shaking her head*). I'm sorry, Papa. I —I don't feel like it. (*She crosses below the table and sits on the chest under the window, with her back to the room.*)

PAPA. So ? So ? (*He rises and goes to the dresser.*)

MAMA. What you want, Lars ?

(PAPA *does not answer. He takes a cup and saucer, comes to the table and pours a cup of coffee, indicating* KATRIN *with his head.* MAMA *nods, pleased, then checks his pouring and fills up the cup from the cream jug which she empties in so doing.* PAPA *puts sugar in, and crosses to* KATRIN.)

PAPA. Katrin. (*He holds out the cup.*)

(KATRIN *turns.*)

KATRIN (*incredulous*). For me ?

PAPA. For our grown-up daughter.

(MAMA *nods, standing arm in arm with* PAPA. KATRIN *takes the cup, lifts it—then her emotion overcomes her. She thrusts it at* PAPA *and rushes from the room.*)

(*As he crosses to the table and puts down the cup.*) Katrin is the dramatic one ! Is too bad. Her first cup of coffee, and she does not drink it.

MAMA. It would not have been good for her, so late at night.

PAPA (*smiling*). And you, Marta, you are the practical one.

MAMA. You drink the coffee, Lars. We do not want to waste it. (*She pushes it across to him.*)

(*The* LIGHTS *dim. The* TABS *close.*

20. *The* LIGHTS *come up on the* L. *turntable, representing the parlour of* JENNY'S *house. There is a table with a telephone on it.* TRINA *is speaking into the 'phone.*)

TRINA (*into the 'phone*). Yes, Peter. Yes, Peter. I know, Peter, but we don't know where he is. It's so long since we heard

from him. He's sure to turn up soon. Yes, I know, Peter. I know, but . . . (*Subsiding obediently.*) Yes, Peter. Yes, Peter.

(JENNY *enters behind her, eating a piece of toast and jam.*)

(*Sentimentally.*) Oh, Peter, you know I do. Good-bye, Peter. (*She hangs up, turns and sees* JENNY.)

JENNY. What was all that about ?

TRINA. Peter says we shouldn't wait any longer to hear from uncle Chris. He says we should send the wedding invitations out right away. He was quite insistent about it. Peter can be very masterful sometimes . . . when he's alone with me !

(*The telephone rings.* JENNY *answers it. She puts down the toast.* TRINA *picks it up and nibbles at it during the scene.*)

JENNY. This is Mrs. Stenborg's boarding house. Mrs. Stenborg speaking . . . Oh, yes, Marta—what is it ? . . . (*She listens.*)

21. (*The* LIGHTS *come up on the* R. *turntable, disclosing* MAMA *standing at a wall telephone booth. She wears a hat and coat, and has an opened telegram in her hand.*)

MAMA. Jenny, is uncle Chris. I have a telegram. It says if we want to see him again we should come without delay.

JENNY. Where is he ?

MAMA (*consulting the telegram*). It comes from a place called Ukiah. Nels says it is up north from San Francisco.

JENNY. Who is the telegram from ?

MAMA. It does not say.

JENNY. That—woman ?

MAMA. I don't know, Jenny. I think maybe.

JENNY. I won't go.

(SIGRID *enters* C. *through the* TABS. *She wears a hat and coat and carries a string bag full of vegetables.*)

(*Whispering to* SIGRID.) It's uncle Chris. Marta says he's dying. (*Into the phone.*) Why was the telegram sent to you ? I'm the eldest.

MAMA. Jenny, is not the time to think of who is eldest. Uncle Chris is dying.

JENNY. *I* don't believe it. He's too mean to die. Ever.

(NELS *enters down* R. *and moves to* MAMA. *He hands her a slip of paper.*)

I'm not going.

MAMA. Jenny, I cannot stop to argue. There is a train at eleven o'clock. It takes four hours. You call Sigrid.

JENNY. Sigrid is here now.

MAMA. Good. Then you tell her.

JENNY. What do you say the name of the place is ?

MAMA. Ukiah. (*Spelling in Norwegian.*) U-K-I-A-H.

JENNY. I won't go.

MAMA. That *you* decide. (*She hangs up.*)

(*The* LIGHTS *on the* R. *turntable go out.*)

SIGRID. Uncle Chris dying !

JENNY. The wages of sin.

TRINA. Oh, he's old. Maybe it is time for him to go.

JENNY. Four hours by train, and maybe have to stay all night. All that expense to watch a wicked old man die of the D.T.'s.

SIGRID. I know, but . . . there is his will . . .

JENNY. Huh, even supposing he's anything to leave—you know who he'd leave it *to*, don't you ?

SIGRID. Yes. But all the same he's dying now, and blood is thicker than water. Especially when it's Norwegian. I'm going. I shall take Arne with me. Uncle Chris was always fond of children.

TRINA. I agree with Sigrid, I thing we *should* go.

JENNY. Well, *you* can't go, anyway.

TRINA. Why not ?

JENNY. Because of that woman. You can't meet a woman like that.

TRINA. Why not ? If you two can . . .

SIGRID. We're married women.

TRINA. I'm engaged !

JENNY. That's not the same thing.

SIGRID. Not the same thing at all !

TRINA. Nonsense. I've never met a woman like that. Maybe I'll never get another chance. Besides, if he's going to change his will, there's still my dowry, remember. Do you think we should take Peter ?

JENNY. Peter Thorkelson. Whatever for ?

TRINA. Well, after all, I mean—I mean, his profession . . .

JENNY. Trina, you always were a fool. Anyone would know the last person a dying man wants to see is an undertaker !

(BLACKOUT. *The turntable revolves out.*

22. (*A spot comes up on* KATRIN, *standing down* R.C. *She wears her school-girl hat.*)

KATRIN. When mama said I was to go with her, I was excited and I was frightened. It was exciting to take sandwiches for the train, almost as though we were going on a picnic. But I was scared at the idea of seeing death, though I told myself that if I was going to be a writer, I had to experience everything. But all the same, I hoped it would be all over when we got there. (*She walks toward* C. *and up the steps.*) It was afternoon when we arrived. We asked at the station for the Halvorsen ranch, and it seemed to me that

the man looked at us strangely. Uncle Chris was obviously considered an odd character. The ranch was about three miles from the town ; a derelict, rambling old place. There was long grass, and tall trees, and a smell of honeysuckle. We made quite a cavalcade, walking up from the gate.

(*The procession enters* R., *behind* KATRIN: MAMA, JENNY, TRINA, SIGRID *and* ARNE.)

The woman came out on the steps to meet us.

(*The procession starts towards the* C., *moving upstage. The* WOMAN *comes through the* TABS, *down one step. The* AUNTS *freeze in their tracks.* MAMA *goes forward to her.*)

MAMA. How is he ? Is he—— ?

WOMAN (*with grave self-possession*). Come in, won't you ?

(*She holds the* TABS *slightly aside.* MAMA *goes in.* KATRIN *follows, looking curiously at the* WOMAN. *The* AUNTS *walk stiffly past her,* SIGRID *clutching* ARNE *and shielding him from contact with the* WOMAN. *They disappear behind the* TABS. *The* WOMAN *stands a moment, looking off into the distance. Then she goes in through the* TABS, *too.*

23. *The* TABS *open, revealing* UNCLE CHRIS'S *bedroom. It is simple, and shabby. The door to the room is* L. *in the back wall. In the* L. *wall is a window, with curtains, drawn aside now. In front of it, a wash-stand. The afternoon sunlight comes through the window, falling on the big double bed, in which* UNCLE CHRIS *is propped up on pillows. Beside him,* R., *on a small table is a carafe of water.* L. *of the bed there is a chair. He has a glass in his hand.* MAMA *stands to the* R. *of him,* JENNY *to the* L. *The others are ranged below the window. The* WOMAN *is not present.*)

UNCLE CHRIS (*handing* MAMA *the empty glass*). I want more. You give me more. Is still some in the bottle.

MAMA. Uncle Chris, that will not help now.

UNCLE CHRIS. It always help. (*With a glance at* JENNY.) Now especially.

JENNY (*firmly*). Uncle Chris, I don't think you realize . . .

UNCLE CHRIS. What I don't realize ? That I am dying ? Why else do I think you come here ? Why else do I think you stand there, watching me ? (*He sits upright.*) Get out. Get out. I don't want you here. Get out !

JENNY. Oh, very well. Very well. We'll be outside on the porch, if you want us. (*She starts towards the door.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. That is where I want you—on the porch !

(JENNY *goes out.* TRINA *follows.* SIGRID *is about to go, too, when* UNCLE CHRIS *stops her.*)

Wait. That is Arne. Come here, Arne.

(ARNE, *propelled by* SIGRID, *advances toward the bed.*)

How is your knee ?

ARNE. It's fine, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. Not hurt any more ? You don't use svear vords any more ?

ARNE. N-no, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. You walk goot ? Quite goot ? Let me see you walk. Walk around the room.

(ARNE *does so.*)

Fast. Fast. Run ! Run !

(ARNE *does so.*)

Is goot.

SIGRID (*encouraged and advancing*). Uncle Chris, Arne has always been so fond of you . . .

UNCLE CHRIS (*shouting*). I tell you all to get out. Except Marta.

(KATRIN *edges with* SIGRID *to the door.*)

And Katrinë. Katrinë and I haf secret. You remember, Katrinë ?

KATRIN. Yes, Uncle Chris.

MAMA. Uncle Chris, you must lie down again.

UNCLE CHRIS. Then you give me drink.

MAMA. No, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. We cannot waste what is left in the bottle. You do not drink it . . . who will drink it when I am gone ? What harm can it do—now ? I die, anyway . . . You give it to me.

(MAMA *crosses to the wash-stand, pours him a drink of whisky and water, and takes it to him, sitting on the bed beside him to the* L. *of him.* KATRIN *moves down* L.)

(*He drinks, then turns to her, leaning back against her arm and the pillows.*) Marta, I haf never made a will. Was never enough money. But you sell this ranch. It will not bring moch. I have not had it long enough. And there is mortgage. Big mortgage. But it leave a little. Maybe two, tree hundred dollars. You give to Yessie.

MAMA. Yessie ?

UNCLE CHRIS. Yessie Brown. My housekeeper. No, why I call her that to you ? You understand. She is my voman. Twelve years she has been my voman. My wife, only I cannot marry her. She has husband alive somewhere. She was trained nurse, but she get sick and I bring her to the country to get well again. There will be no money for *you*, Marta. Always I wanted there should be money to make Nils doctor. But there were other things—quick

things. And now there is no time to make more. There is no money, but you make Nils doctor, all the same. You like ?

MAMA. Sure, Uncle Chris. It is what Lars and I have always wanted for him. To help people who suffer . . .

UNCLE CHRIS. Is the greatest thing in the world. It is to have a little of God in you. Always I wanted to be doctor myself. Is the only thing I have ever wanted. Nils must do it for me.

MAMA. He will, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. Is goot. (*He strokes her hand.*) You are the goot one. I am glad you come, *Lille Ven*. (*He moves his head restlessly.*) Where is Yessie ?

MAMA. I think she wait outside.

UNCLE CHRIS. You do not mind if she is here ?

MAMA. Of course not, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. You call her. I like you both be here.

(MAMA *goes out, with a quick glance at* KATRIN, *who has been standing, forgotten, down* L. *listening intently.* UNCLE CHRIS *signs to* KATRIN *to come closer. She sits on the chair* L. *of the bed.*)

Katrinë, your mama write me you drink coffee now ?

(KATRIN *nods.*)

(*He looks at her affectionately.*) Katrinë, who will be writer . . . You are not frightened of me now ?

KATRIN. No, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. One day maybe you write story about uncle Chris. If you remember.

KATRIN (*whispering*). I'll remember.

(MAMA *enters with the* WOMAN. KATRIN *rises. They come to the bed and stand on either side of it*—MAMA *to the* L.)

UNCLE CHRIS (*obviously exhausted and in pain*). I like you both stay with me—now. I think best now maybe Katrinë go away. Good-bye, Katrinë. (*He repeats it in Norwegian.*) *Farvell*, Katrinë.

KATRIN. Good-bye, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. You say it in Norwegian, like I do.

KATRIN. *Farvell, Onkel* Chris.

(*She slips out of the room, in tears.*)

UNCLE CHRIS. Yessie ! Maybe I should introduce you to each other. Yessie, this is my niece, Marta. The only von of my nieces I can stand. Marta, this is Yessie, who have give me much happiness . . .

(MAMA *and* JESSIE *shake hands across the bed.*)

MAMA. I am very glad to meet you.

JESSIE. I am, too.

UNCLE CHRIS (*as they shake*). Is goot. And now you give me

von more drink. You have drink with me—both of you. That way we finish the bottle. Yes ?

(JESSIE *and* MAMA *look at each other.*)

MAMA. Sure, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. Goot. Yessie, you get best glasses. (*With a chuckle to* MAMA.) Yessie does not like to drink, but this is special occasion.

(JESSIE *gets three glasses from a wall shelf at* R. *and crosses with them to the wash-stand.*)

What is the time ?

MAMA. It is about half-past four, Uncle Chris.

UNCLE CHRIS. The sun come around this side the house in afternoon. You draw the curtain a little maybe. Is strong for my eyes.

(MAMA *crosses and draws the curtain over the window. The stage darkens.* JESSIE *pours three drinks, filling two of the glasses with water. She is about to put water in the third when* UNCLE CHRIS *stops her.*)

No, no, I take it now without water. Always the last drink without water. Is Norwegian custom. (*To* MAMA, *with a smile.*) True ?

(JESSIE *crosses to* R. *of the bed and sits on it beside* UNCLE CHRIS, *about to feed his drink to him, but he pushes her aside.*)

No. No, I do not need you feed it to me. I can drink myself. (*He takes the glass from her.*) Give Marta her glass.

(JESSIE *hands a glass to* MAMA. *The two women stand one each side of the bed, holding their glasses.*)

So . . . Skoal !

JESSIE (*clinking glasses with him*). Skoal.

MAMA (*doing likewise*). Skoal.

(*They all three drink. The* LIGHTS *dim slowly to blackout. The* TABS *close.*

24. *The* LIGHTS *come up on the* R. *turntable showing a porch with a bench, and a chair, on which the three* AUNTS *are sitting.* JENNY *is dozing in the chair.*)

SIGRID (*flicking her handkerchief*). These gnats are awful. I'm being simply eaten alive.

TRINA. Gnats are always worse around sunset. (*She catches one.*)

JENNY (*rousing herself*). I should never have let you talk me into coming. To be insulted like that—turned out of his room—and then expected to sit here hour after hour without as much as a cup of coffee. . . .

SIGRID. I'd make coffee if I knew where the kitchen was.

JENNY. *Her* kitchen? It would poison me. (*Rising.*) No, I'm going home. Are you coming, Trina?

TRINA. Oh, I think we ought to wait a little longer. After all, you can't *hurry* these things . . . I mean . . . (*She breaks off in confusion at what she has said.*)

JENNY (*to* SIGRID). And all your talk about his will. A lot of chance we got to say a word!

TRINA. Maybe Marta's been talking to him.

(MAMA *enters* C. *through the* TABS.)

JENNY. Well?

MAMA. Uncle Chris has—gone.

(*There is silence.*)

JENNY (*more gently than is her wont*). Did he—say anything about a will?

MAMA. There is no will.

JENNY. Well, then, that means—we're his nearest relatives . . .

MAMA. There is no money, either.

SIGRID. How do you know?

MAMA. He told me. (*She brings out a small notebook that she is carrying.*)

JENNY. What's that?

MAMA. Is an account of how he spent the money.

JENNY. Bills from a liquor store.

MAMA. No, Jenny. No. I read it to you.

(JENNY *sits.*)

You know how uncle Chris was lame—how he walked always with limp. It was his one thought—lame people. He would have liked to be doctor and help them. Instead, he help them other ways. I read you the last page . . . (*She reads from the notebook.*) "Joseph Spinelli. Four years old. Tubercular left leg. Three hundred thirty-seven dollars, eighteen cents." (*She pauses.*) "Walks now. Esta Jensen. Nine years. Club-foot. Two hundred seventeen dollars, fifty cents. Walks now." (*Then, reading very slowly.*) "*Arne* Solfeldt . . ."

SIGRID (*startled*). *My* Arne?

MAMA (*reading on*). "Nine years. Fractured kneecap. Four hundred forty-two dollars, sixteen cents."

(KATRIN *and* ARNE *run in from the* L. *across the stage.*)

ARNE (*calling*). Mother—mother—are we going to eat soon? (*He stops awed by the solemnity of the group.*) What is it? Is uncle Chris . . . ?

(MAMA *puts out a hand gently to silence him.*)

MAMA (*to the* AUNTS). It does not tell the end about Arne. I like to write " Walks now." Yes ?

SIGRID (*very subdued*). Yes.

MAMA (*taking a pencil from the book*). Maybe even—" runs " ?

(SIGRID *nods, moist-eyed.* TRINA *is crying.* MAMA *writes in the book, then closes it.*)

So. Is finished. Is all. (*She touches* JENNY *on the shoulder.*) It was good.

JENNY (*after a gulping movement*). I go and make some coffee.

(*The woman,* JESSIE, *enters* C. *through the* TABS, *and stands on the steps.*)

JESSIE. You can go in and see him now if you want.

(JENNY *looks back, half-hesitant, at the others. Then she nods and goes in.* TRINA *follows her, mopping her eyes.* SIGRID *puts her arm suddenly around* ARNE *in a spasm of maternal affection, and they, too, go in.* MAMA *and* JESSIE *are left alone.* KATRIN *stands* L.C.)

I'm moving down to the hotel for to-night—so that you can all stay. (*She is about to go through the* TABS.)

MAMA (*stopping her*). Wait. What will you do now—after he is buried ? You have money ?

(JESSIE *shakes her head.*)

Where you live ?

JESSIE. I'll find a room somewhere. I'll probably go back to nursing.

MAMA. You like to come to San Francisco for a little ? To our house ? We have room. Plenty room.

JESSIE (*touched, moving to* MAMA). That's very kind of you, but . . .

MAMA. I like to have you. You come for a little as our guest. When you get work you can be our boarder.

JESSIE (*awkwardly grateful*). I don't know why you should bother . . .

MAMA (*touching her*). You were good to uncle Chris.

(JESSIE *grasps* MAMA'S *hand, deeply moved, then turns and goes quickly through the* TABS.)

(*She turns to* KATRIN.) Katrin, you come and see him ?

KATRIN (*scared*). See him ? You mean . . .

MAMA. I like you see him. You need not be frightened. He looks—happy and at peace. I like you to know what death looks like. Then you are not frightened of it, ever.

KATRIN. Will you come with me ?

MAMA. Sure.

(*She stretches out her hand, puts her arm around* KATRIN, *and leads her gently through the* TABS.

25. *The* LIGHTS *come up on the* L. *turntable, representing a park bench against a hedge.* TRINA, *and* MR. THORKELSON, *in outdoor clothes, are seated together.* TRINA *is cooing over a baby-carriage.*)

TRINA. Who's the most beautiful Norwegian baby in San Francisco? Who's going to be three months old to-morrow? Little Christopher Thorkelson! (*To* MR. THORKELSON.) Do you know, Peter, I think he's even beginning to *look* a little like uncle Chris! Quite apart from his black curls—and those, of course, he gets from *you*. (*To the baby.*) He's going to grow up to be a black Norwegian, isn't he, just like his daddy and his uncle Chris? (*Settling down beside* MR. THORKELSON.) I think there's something about his mouth—a sort of—well—*firmness*. Of course, it's *your* mouth, too. But then I've always thought you had quite a lot of uncle Chris about you. (*She looks back at the baby.*) Look—he's asleep!

MR. THORKELSON. Trina, do you know what next Thursday is?

TRINA (*nodding, smilingly*). Our anniversary.

MR. THORKELSON. What would you think of our giving a little party?

TRINA. A party?

MR. THORKELSON. Oh, quite a modest one. Nothing showy or ostentatious—but, after all, we have been married a year, and with your having been in mourning and the baby coming so soon and everything, we've not been able to entertain. I think it's time you took your place in society.

TRINA (*scared*). What—sort of a party?

MR. THORKELSON. An evening party. (*Proudly.*) A soirée! I should say about ten people—some of the Norwegian colony—and Lars and Marta, of course . . .

TRINA (*beginning to count on her fingers*). And Jenny and Sigrid . . .

MR. THORKELSON. Oh—I—I hadn't thought of asking Jenny and Sigrid.

TRINA. Oh, we'd have to. We couldn't leave them out.

MR. THORKELSON. Trina, I hope you won't be offended if I say that I have never really felt—well, altogether comfortable with Jenny and Sigrid. They have always made me feel that they didn't think I was—well—*worthy* of you. Of course, I know I'm not, but—well—one doesn't like to be reminded of it—*all* the time.

TRINA (*taking his hand*). Oh, Peter.

MR. THORKELSON. But you're quite right. We must ask them. Now, as to the matter of refreshments—what would you suggest?

TRINA (*flustered*). Oh, I don't know. I . . . what would you say to—ice cream and cookies for the ladies—and coffee, of course——and—perhaps port wine for the gentlemen?

MR. THORKELSON (*anxiously*). Port wine ?

TRINA. Just a little. You could bring it in already poured out, in *little* glasses. Jenny and Sigrid can help me serve the ice cream.

MR. THORKELSON (*firmly*). No. If Jenny and Sigrid come, they come as guests, like everyone else. You shall have someone in to help you in the kitchen.

TRINA. You mean a waitress ?

(MR. THORKELSON *nods, beaming.*)

Oh, but none of us have *ever* . . . do you really think . . . I mean . . . you did say we shouldn't be ostentatious . . .

MR. THORKELSON (*nervously, rising and starting to pace up and down*). Trina, there's something I would like to say. I've never been very good at expressing myself or my—well—*deeper* feelings—but I want you to know that I'm not only very fond of you, but very —well—very *proud* of you as well, and I want you to have the best of everything, as far as it's in my power to give it to you. (*He sits again—then, as a climax.*) I want you to have a waitress !

TRINA (*overcome*). Yes, Peter.

(*They hold hands. The* LIGHTS *fade and the turntable revolves out.*

26. *The* TABS *part on the kitchen, slightly changed, smartened and refurnished now.* MAMA *and* PAPA *are seated as usual* L. *and* R. *of the table.* MAMA *is darning.* DAGMAR, *looking a little older, is seated on the chest, reading a solid-looking book.* NELS *enters up* L., *carrying a newspaper and a letter. He wears long trousers now, and looks about seventeen.*)

NELS (*crossing and hitting* PAPA *playfully on the head with the paper*). Hello ! Here's your evening paper, Papa.

(PAPA *puts down the morning paper he is reading, and takes the evening one from* NELS.)

PAPA. Is there any news ?

NELS. No. (*He takes out a package of cigarettes with elaborate unconcern.*)

(MAMA *watches with disapproval.*)

(*He is about to light his cigarette, but stops, remembering something.*) Oh, I forgot. There's a letter for Katrin. I picked it up on the mat as I came in. (*He goes to the door up* L. *and calls.*) Katrin ! Katrin ! There's a letter for you.

KATRIN (*off*). Coming !

MAMA. Nels, you know who the letter is from ?

NELS (*coming down to* MAMA). Why, no, Mama. (*He hands it to her.*) It looks like her own handwriting.

MAMA (*gravely inspecting it*). Is bad.

PAPA. Why is bad ?

MAMA. She get too many like that. I think they are stories she send to the magazines.

DAGMAR (*closing her book loudly and rising*). Well, I'll go and see if I have any puppies yet. (*She crosses below the table and then turns.*) Mama, I've just decided something.

MAMA. What have you decided ?

DAGMAR. If Nels is going to be a doctor, when I grow up, I'm going to be a—— (*looking at the book-title, and stumbling over the word*)—vet-vet-veterinarian.

MAMA. And what is that ?

DAGMAR. A doctor for animals.

MAMA. Is good. Is good.

DAGMAR. There are far more animals in the world than there are human beings, and far more human doctors than animal ones. It isn't fair. (*She crosses to the door up* R.) I suppose we couldn't have a horse, could we ?

(*This only produces a concerted laugh from the family.*)

(*She turns sadly.*) No—I was afraid we couldn't.

(*She goes out up* R. KATRIN *enters up* L. *She wears a slightly more adult dress than before. Her hair is up and she looks about eighteen.*)

KATRIN. Where's the letter ?

MAMA (*handing it to her*). Here.

(KATRIN *takes it, nervously. She looks at the envelope, and her face falls. She opens it, pulls out a manuscript and a rejection slip, looks at it a moment, and then replaces both in the envelope. The others watch her covertly. Then she looks up, with determination.*)

KATRIN (*above the table*). Mama—Papa—I want to say something.

PAPA. What is it ?

KATRIN. I'm not going to go to college.

PAPA. Why not ?

KATRIN. Because it would be a waste of time and money. The only point in my going to college was to be a writer. Well, I'm not going to be one, so . . .

MAMA. Katrin, is it your letter that makes you say this ? It is a story come back again ?

KATRIN. Again is right. This is the tenth time. I made this one a test. It's the best I've ever written, or ever shall write. I know that. Well, it's no good.

NELS (R. *of her*). What kind of a story is it ?

KATRIN. Oh—it's a story about a painter, who's a genius, and he goes blind.

NELS. Sounds like " The Light That Failed."

KATRIN. Well, what's wrong with that ?

NELS (*quickly*). Nothing. Nothing!

KATRIN (*moving down* L.). Besides, it's not like that. My painter gets better. He has an operation and recovers his sight, and paints better than ever before.

MAMA. Is good.

KATRIN (*bitterly unhappy*). No, it isn't. It's rotten. But it's the best I can do.

MAMA. You have asked your teachers about this?

KATRIN. Teachers don't know anything about writing. They just know about literature. (*She crosses* R.)

MAMA. If there was someone we could ask—for advice . . . to tell us—tell us if your stories are good.

KATRIN. Yes. Well, there isn't. And they're *not*.

PAPA (*looking at the evening paper*). There is something here in the paper about a lady writer. I just noticed the headline. Wait. (*He looks back for it and reads.*) "Woman writer tells key to literary success."

KATRIN. Who?

PAPA. A lady called Florence Dana Moorhead. It gives her picture. A fat lady. You have heard of her?

KATRIN. Yes, of course. Everyone has. She's terribly successful. She's here on a lecture tour.

MAMA. What does she say is the secret?

PAPA. You read it, Katrin. (*He hands* KATRIN *the paper.*)

KATRIN (*reading, gabbling the first part*). "Florence Dana Moorhead, celebrated novelist and short story writer . . . blah-blah-blah . . . interviewed to-day in her suite at the Fairmont . . . blah-blah-blah . . . pronounced sincerity the one essential quality for success as a writer." (*She throws aside the paper.*) A lot of help that is.

MAMA. Katrin, this lady . . . maybe if you sent her your stories, *she* could tell you what is wrong with them?

KATRIN (*wearily*). Oh, Mama, don't be silly.

MAMA. Why is silly?

KATRIN (*moving above the table*). Well, in the first place because she's a very important person—a celebrity—and she'd never read them. And in the second, because . . . you seem to think writing's like—well, like cooking, or something. That all you have to have is the recipe. It takes a lot more than that. You have to have a gift for it.

MAMA. You have to have a gift for cooking, too. But there are things you can learn, if you have the gift.

KATRIN. Well, that's the whole point. I haven't. I *know* now. So, if you've finished with the morning paper, Papa, I'll take the want-ad. section, and see if I can find myself a job.

(*She takes the morning paper and goes out up* L.)

MAMA. Is bad. Nels, what you think?

NELS. I don't know, Mama. Her stories seem all right to me, but I don't know.

MAMA. It would be good to know. Nels, this lady in the paper . . . what else does she say ?

NELS (*taking up the paper*). Not much. The rest seems to be about *her* and her home. Let's see . . . (*He reads, walking down* L.) "Apart from literature, Mrs. Moorhead's main interest is life is gastronomy."

MAMA. The stars ?

NELS. No—eating. "A brilliant cook herself, she says that she would as soon turn out a good soufflé as a short story, or find a new recipe as she would a first edition."

MAMA (*reaching for the paper*). I see her picture ? (*She looks at it.*) Is kind face. (*Pause while she reads a moment. Then she looks up and asks.*) What is first edition ?

(BLACKOUT. *The* TABS *close.*

27. *The* LIGHTS *come up on the* L. *turntable, representing the lobby of the Fairmont Hotel. There is a couch against a column with a palm behind it. An orchestra plays softly in the background.* MAMA *is discovered seated on the couch, waiting patiently. She wears a hat and a suit, and clutches a newspaper and a bundle of manuscripts. A couple of guests enter* C. *through the* TABS *and cross, disappearing into the wings* L. MAMA *watches them. Then* FLORENCE DANA MOORHEAD *enters through the* TABS. *She is a stout, dressy, good-natured, middle-aged woman. A* BELL-BOY *enters from the* R., *paging her.*)

BELL-BOY. Miss Moorhead ?

MISS MOORHEAD. Yes ? (*She stands, waiting on the steps.*)

BELL-BOY. Telegram.

MISS MOORHEAD. Oh. Thank you. (*She tips him.*)

(*The* BELL-BOY *exits* R. MAMA *rises and moves towards* MISS MOORHEAD.)

MAMA. Please—please—Miss Moorhead . . . Miss Moorhead.

MISS MOORHEAD (*looking up from her telegram*). Were you calling me ?

MAMA. Yes. You are—Miss Florence Dana Moorhead ?

MISS MOORHEAD. Yes.

MAMA. Please—might I speak to you for a moment ?

MISS MOORHEAD. Yes—what's it about ?

MAMA. I read in the paper what you say about writing.

MISS MOORHEAD (*with a vague social smile*). Oh, yes ?

MAMA. My daughter, Katrin, wants to be writer.

MISS MOORHEAD (*who has heard that one before*). Oh, really ? (*She glances at her watch on her bosom.*)

MAMA. I bring her stories.

MISS MOORHEAD. Look, I'm afraid I'm in rather a hurry. I'm leaving San Francisco this evening . . .

MAMA. I wait two hours here for you to come in. Please, if I may talk to you for one, two minutes. That is all.

MISS MOORHEAD (*kindly*). Of course, but I think I'd better tell you that if you want me to read your daughter's stories, it's no use. I'm very sorry, but I've had to make it a rule never to read anyone's unpublished material.

(MAMA *nods.*)

MAMA (*after a pause*). It said in the paper you like to collect recipes . . . for eating.

MISS MOORHEAD. Yes, I do. I've written several books on cooking.

MAMA. I, too, am interested in gastronomy. I am good cook. Norwegian. I make good Norwegian dishes. Lutefisk. And Kjodboller. That is meat-balls with cream sauce.

MISS MOORHEAD. Yes, I know. I've eaten them in Christiania.

MAMA. I have a special recipe for Kjodboller—my mother give me. She was best cook I ever knew. Never have I told this recipe, not even to my own sisters, because they are not good cooks.

MISS MOORHEAD (*amused*). Oh ?

MAMA. But—if you let me talk to you—I give it to you. I promise it is good recipe.

MISS MOORHEAD (*vastly tickled now*). Well, that seems fair enough. Let's sit down.

(*They move to the couch and sit.*)

Now, your daughter wants to write, you say ? How old is she ?

MAMA. She is eighteen. Just.

MISS MOORHEAD. *Does* she write, or does she just—*want* to write ?

MAMA. Oh, she write all the time. Maybe she should not be author, but it is hard to give up something that has meant so much.

MISS MOORHEAD. I agree, but . . .

MAMA. I bring her stories. I bring twelve.

MISS MOORHEAD (*aghast*). Twelve !

MAMA. But if you could read maybe just one . . . To know if someone is good cook, you do not need to eat a whole dinner.

MISS MOORHEAD. You're very persuasive. How is it your daughter did not come herself ?

MAMA. She was too unhappy. And too scared—of you. Because you are celebrity. But I see your picture in the paper . . .

MISS MOORHEAD. That frightful picture !

MAMA. Is the picture of woman who like to eat good . . .

MISS MOORHEAD (*with a rueful smile*). It certainly is. Now, tell me about the Kjodboller.

MAMA. When you make the meat-balls you drop them in boiling stock. Not water. That is one of the secrets.

MISS MOORHEAD. Ah !

MAMA. And the cream sauce. That is another secret. It is half *sour* cream, added at the last.

MISS MOORHEAD. That sounds marvellous.

MAMA. You must grind the meat six times. I could write it out for you. And— (*tentatively*) while I write, you could read ?

MISS MOORHEAD (*with a laugh*). All right. You win. Come upstairs to my apartment. (*She rises.*)

MAMA. Is kind of you. (*As they go* L.) Maybe if you would read *two* stories, I could write the recipe for Lutefisk as well. You know Lutefisk . . . ?

(*They disappear into the wings. The* LIGHTS *dim, and the turntable revolves out.*

28. *The* LIGHTS *come up on the* R. *turntable, showing* KATRIN *at her desk.*)

KATRIN. When mama came back, I was sitting with my diary, which I called my Journal now, writing a Tragic Farewell to my Art. It was very seldom that mama came to the attic, thinking that a writer needed privacy, and I was surprised to see her standing in the doorway. (*She looks up.*)

(MAMA *has entered* C. *through the* TABS *and is standing on the steps.*)

Mama !

MAMA. You are busy, Katrin ?

KATRIN (*jumping up*). No, of course not. Come in.

MAMA (*coming down*). I like to talk to you.

KATRIN. Yes, of course.

MAMA (*seating herself at the desk*). You are writing ?

KATRIN (*on the steps*). No. I told you, that's all over.

MAMA. That is what I want to talk to you about.

KATRIN. It's all right, Mama. Really, it's all right. I was planning to tear up all my stories this afternoon, only I couldn't find half of them.

MAMA. They are here.

KATRIN. Did *you* take them ? What for ?

MAMA. Katrin, I have been to see Miss Moorhead.

KATRIN. Who's Miss . . . ? You don't mean Florence Dana Moorhead ?

(MAMA *nods.*)

You don't mean . . . (*She comes down to her.*) Mama, you don't mean you took her my stories ?

MAMA. She read five of them. I was two hours with her. We have glass of sherry. Two glass of sherry.

KATRIN. What—what did she say about them ?

MAMA (*quietly*). She say they are not good.

KATRIN (*turning away*). Well, I knew that. It was hardly worth your going to all that trouble just to be told that.

MAMA. She say more. Will you listen, Katrin ?

KATRIN (*trying to be gracious*). Sure. Sure. I'll listen.

MAMA. I will try and remember. She say you write now only because of what you have read in other books, and that no one can write good until they have felt what they write about. That for years she write bad stories about people in the olden times, until one day she remember something that happen in her own town—something that only she could know and understand—and she feels she must tell it . . . and that is how she write her first good story. She say you must write more of things you know . . .

KATRIN. That's what my teacher always told me at school.

MAMA. Maybe your teacher was right. I do not know if I explain good what Miss Moorhead means, but while she talks I think I understand. Your story about the painter who is blind—that is because . . . forgive me if I speak plain, my Katrin, but it is important to you . . . because you are the dramatic one, as papa has said . . . and you think it would feel good to be a painter and be blind and not complain. But never have you imagined how it would really be. Is true ?

KATRIN (*subdued*). Yes, I—I guess it's true.

MAMA. But she say you are to go on writing. That you have the gift.

(KATRIN *turns back to her, suddenly aglow.*)

And that when you have written story that is real and true . . . then you send it to someone whose name she give me. (*She fumbles for a piece of paper.*) It is her—agent—and say she recommend you. Here. No, that is recipe she give me for goulash as her grandmother make it . . . here. (*She hands over the paper.*) It helps, Katrin, what I have told you ?

KATRIN (*subdued again*). Yes, I—I guess it helps. Some. But what have *I* got to write about ? I haven't seen anything, or been anywhere.

MAMA. Could you write about San Francisco, maybe ? Is fine city. Miss Moorhead write about her home town.

KATRIN. Yes, I know. But you've got to have a central character or something. She writes about her grandfather—he was a wonderful old man.

MAMA. Could you maybe write about papa ?

KATRIN. Papa ?

MAMA. Papa is fine man. Is wonderful man.

KATRIN. Yes, I know, but . . .

MAMA (*rising*). I must go fix supper. Is late. Papa will be home. (*She goes up the steps to the* TABS, *and then turns back.*) I like you should write about papa.

(*She exits through the* TABS.)

KATRIN (*going back to her seat behind the desk*). Papa. Yes, but what's he ever done? What's ever happened to him? What's ever happened to *any* of us? Except always being poor and having illness, like the time when Dagmar went to hospital and mama . . . (*The idea hits her like a flash.*) Oh—Oh . . . (*Pause—then she becomes the* KATRIN *of to-day.*) And that was how it was born—suddenly in a flash—the story of "Mama and the Hospital"—the first of all the stories. I wrote it—oh, quite soon after that. I didn't tell mama or any of them. But I sent it to Miss Moorhead's agent. It was a long time before I heard anything. And then one evening the letter came. (*She takes an envelope from the desk in front of her.*) For a moment I couldn't believe it. Then I went rushing into the kitchen, shouting . . . (*She rises from the desk, taking some papers with her, and rushes up the steps.*) Mama. Mama.

29. (*The* TABS *open on the kitchen and the family tableau.* MAMA *is seated* R. *of the table with* CHRISTINE *standing behind her.* PAPA *is seated* L. *of the table.* NELS *is seated on the chest.* DAGMAR *is not present.* KATRIN *comes rushing in, up the steps. The* R. *turntable revolves out as soon as she has left it.*)

Mama . . . Mama . . . I've sold a story!

MAMA. A story?

KATRIN. Yes. I've got a letter from the agent—with a cheque for—(*gasping*) five hundred dollars!

NELS. No kidding? (*He rises and crosses to* C. *above the table.*)

MAMA. Katrin—is true?

KATRIN. Here it is. Here's the letter. Maybe I haven't read it right. (*She hands the letter to* MAMA.)

(PAPA *rises and crosses above the table to* MAMA. *They huddle and gloat over the cheque.*)

CHRISTINE (*behind* MAMA'S *chair*). What will you *do* with five hundred dollars?

KATRIN. I don't know. I'll buy mama her warm coat, I *know* that.

CHRISTINE. Coats don't cost five hundred dollars.

KATRIN. I know. We'll put the rest in the Bank.

NELS (*kidding*). Quick. Before they change their mind, and stop the cheque.

KATRIN. Will you, Mama? Will you take it to the Bank down-town to-morrow?

(MAMA *looks vague.*)

What is it?

MAMA. I do not know how.

NELS. Just give it to the man and tell him to put it in your account, like you always do.

(MAMA *looks up at* PAPA.)

PAPA. You tell them—now.

CHRISTINE. Tell us what ?

MAMA (*desperately*). Is no bank account ! (*She rises, feeling hemmed in by them, comes below the table and sits on the bench.*) Never in my life have I been inside a bank.

CHRISTINE. But you always told us . . .

KATRIN. Mama, you've always said . . .

MAMA. I know. But was not true. I tell a lie.

KATRIN. But why, Mama ? Why did you pretend ?

MAMA. Is not good for little ones to be afraid . . . to not feel secure. (*Rising and moving* L.) But now—with five hundred dollar —I think I can tell.

KATRIN (*going to her ; emotionally*). Mama !

MAMA (*stopping her, quickly*). You read us the story. You have it there ?

KATRIN. Yes.

MAMA. Then read.

KATRIN. Now ?

MAMA. Yes. No. Wait. Dagmar must hear. (*She crosses up* R., *opens the pantry door and calls.*) Dagmar.

DAGMAR (*off*). Yes, Mama ?

MAMA (*calling*). Come here, I want you.

DAGMAR (*off*). What is it ?

MAMA. I want you. No, you leave the rabbits ! (*She comes back.*) What is it called . . . the story ?

KATRIN (*sitting in the chair* L. *of the table*). It's called " Mama and the Hospital."

PAPA (*delighted*). You write about mama ? (*He crosses to the chair below the stove.*)

KATRIN. Yes.

MAMA. But I thought . . . I thought you say . . . I tell you . . . (*She gestures at* PAPA, *behind his back.*)

KATRIN. I know, Mama, but—well, that's how it came out.

(DAGMAR *enters up* R. MAMA *sits* R. *of the table.* PAPA *brings the chair from below the stove, places it above* MAMA *and sits.* CHRISTINE *sits in the chair* R. *above the table and* NELS *sits in the chair* L. *above the table.*)

DAGMAR. What is it ? What do you want ?

MAMA. Katrin write story for magazine. They pay her five hundred dollar to print it.

DAGMAR (*completely uninterested*). Oh. (*She starts back for the pantry.*)

MAMA (*stopping her*). She read it to us. I want you should listen.

(DAGMAR *comes downstage and sits on the floor at* MAMA'S *feet.*)

You are ready, Katrin ?

KATRIN. Sure.
MAMA. Then read.

(*The group around the table is now a duplicate of the grouping around* MR. HYDE *in the first scene, with* KATRIN *in his place and* CHRISTINE *in* TRINA'S *chair.*)

KATRIN (*reading*). "For as long as I could remember, the house on Steiner Street had been home. All of us were born there. Nels, the oldest and the only boy . . ."

(NELS *looks up, astonished to be in a story.*)

" my sister, Christine . . ."

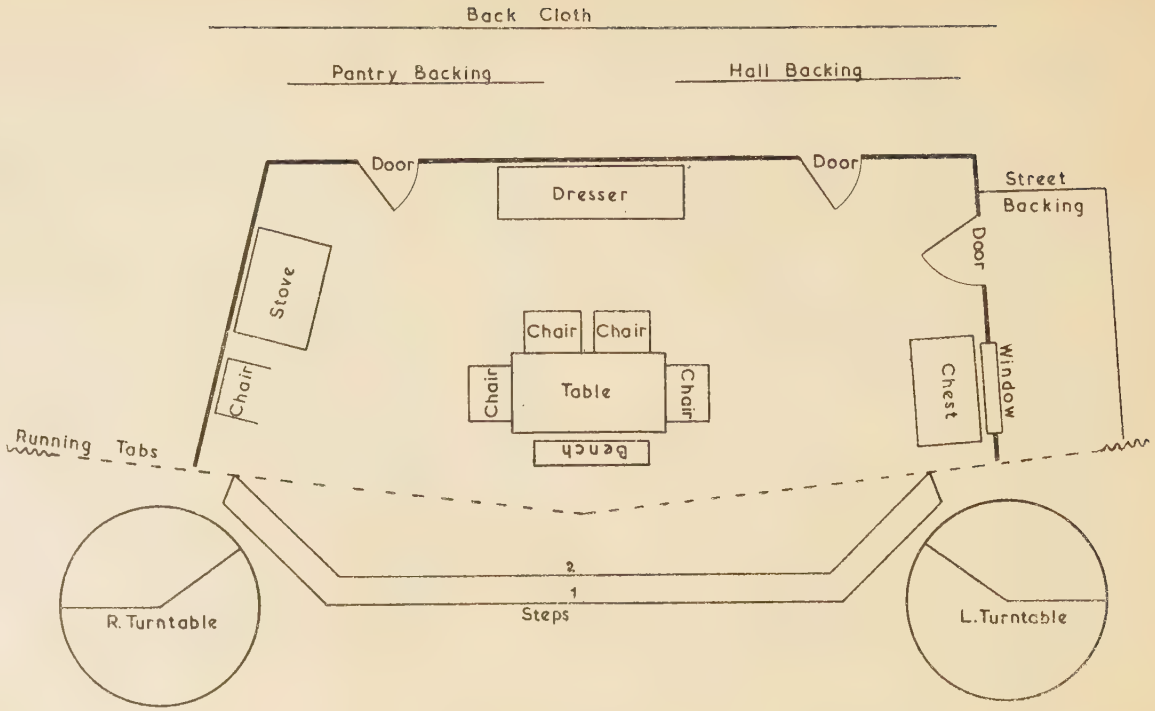
(CHRISTINE *looks up.*)

" and the littlest sister, Dagmar . . ."
DAGMAR. Am I in the story?
MAMA. Hush, Dagmar. We are all in the story.
KATRIN. " But first and foremost, I remember Mama."

(*The* LIGHTS *begin to dim and the* CURTAIN *slowly falls.*)

" I remember that every Saturday night mama would sit down by the kitchen table and count out the money papa had brought home in the little envelope . . ."

(*By now, the* CURTAIN *is down.*)


Back Cloth
Pantry Backing
Hall Backing
Door
Dresser
Door
Street
Backing
Door
Stove
Chair
Chair
Chair
Table
Chair
Bench
Chest
Window
Running Tabs
2
1
Steps
R. Turntable
L. Turntable

FURNITURE AND PROPERTY PLOT.

ACT I.

1. R. Turntable.

Desk. *On it :* cigarettes, matches, pen, pencil, diary, papers, letter with cheque, manuscript, ashtray.

Chair.

2. Kitchen:

Table. *On it :* envelope and 13 coins, pencil, paper.

Dresser. *On it :* small box, 5 cups and saucers, ashtray, work-basket, china as required to dress.

Stove. *On it :* coffee pot, spoon.

Chest.

On pantry shelf : water jug, milk jug.

Off Stage R. : cat (DAGMAR).

Off Stage L. : box of crayons, scissors, picture book (CHRISTINE).
Diary (KATRIN).
Book (MR. HYDE).

Personal : PAPA, pipe.
CHRISTINE, handkerchief.
NELS, piece of paper, wire puzzle.

3. R. Turntable.

Desk *as in* 1 *above.*

4. L. Turntable.

Kitchen table. *On it :* pastry board, rolling pin, dough, raisins, cutter, flour sifter, towel, crochet work.

5. Kitchen, *as in* 2 *above.*

On Table : ashtray.

On Chest : doctor's bag and hat.

On Dresser : small box.

In Car : box of oranges.

Off Stage L. : blanket (DAGMAR).
Attache case (MAMA).

Personal : UNCLE CHRIS, pencil, snuff box.

6. R. Turntable.

Stepladder.
Pair of roller skates.
2 Glasses of milk.
2 Plates of biscuits.

7. Hospital.

Desk. *On it :* books, papers, pencil, telephone.

Off Stage R. : mop, pail (CHARWOMAN).

Off Stage L. Stethoscope (DOCTOR).
Tray of dressings (ORDERLY).
Bag, hat (DR. JOHNSON).

8. R. Turntable.
Bench.
Chair.
Table. *On it :* potted plant.
On wall : clock.

9. Kitchen *as in* 2 *above.*
Off Stage R. : apron, bucket, scrubbing brush (MAMA).

10. L. Turntable.
Bed.
Chair.
Personal : UNCLE CHRIS, flask.

11. Hospital *as in* 7 *above.*
In Cupboard : mop, bucket.
Off Stage L. : charts (NURSE).
Personal : KATRIN, pencil, paper.

ACT II.

12. R. Turntable.
Desk *as in* 1 *above.*

13. L. Turntable.
Table. *On it :* sugar basin.
2 Chairs.
Off Stage L. : cup of coffee, ice cream soda (SODA CLERK).
Personal : MAMA, 2 coins, handbag, handkerchief.

14. Kitchen *as in* 2 *above.*
No ashtray on table.
Off Stage R. : tray with bread, butter, milk, jelly (MAMA).
Off Stage L. : suitcase, letter (MR. HYDE).
School books (CHRISTINE).
Books (PAPA).
Medicine bottle (NELS).
Personal : PAPA, newspaper.

15. Kitchen *as in* 14 *above.*
Strike : all books, clothes from chest.
Set—on Table : plates, napkins, cups and saucers for five, sugar basin, cream jug.
Off Stage R. : cat (DAGMAR).

16. Front Stage.
Off Stage R. : school books (DAGMAR).

17. Kitchen *as in* 2 *above.*
On Table : tray, dishes, sugar basin, 2 cups of coffee.
On Chair below stove : dresser set.
On Chest : Dagmar's hat and coat, Mama's hat and coat.
In Dresser Cupboard : set of draughts and board.

18. R. Turntable.
Table with mirror and lights.
Chair.

19. Kitchen *as in* 2 *above*.
On Table : sugar basin, cream jug, 2 cups of coffee, coffee pot.
Personal : KATRIN, brooch in tissue paper.

20. L. Turntable.
Table. *On it :* telephone, telephone directory.
Off Stage L. : piece of toast (JENNY).
String bag (SIGRID).

21. R. Turntable.
Wall telephone.
Telegram.

22. Front Stage.

23. Bedroom.
Bed.
Table. *On it :* water carafe, glass.
Wash-stand. *On it :* bottle of whisky, water carafe.
Chair.
On Shelf : 3 glasses.

24. R. Turntable.
Bench.
Chair.
Personal : MAMA, notebook, pencil.

25. L. Turntable.
Park bench.
Perambulator.

26. Kitchen *as in* 2 *above*.
On Table : workbasket, darning, ashtray, newspaper.
On Chest : book.
Off Stage L. : newspaper, letter (NELS).
Personal : NELS, cigarettes, matches.

27. L. Turntable.
Couch.
Potted palm.
Manuscripts, newspaper (MAMA).

28. R. Turntable.
Desk *as in* 1 *above*.
Personal : MAMA, piece of paper.

29. Kitchen *as in* 2 *above*.
On table : darning, ashtray.

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